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THE GIFT OF TONGUES

The Heights of Christian Living

A Study of The Sermon
on the Mount

By **DOREMUS A. HAYES**

Chair of New Testament Interpretation
Graduate School of Theology
Evanston, Illinois



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TO
MY DAUGHTER
MARGARET BRAND HAYES
WHOSE HOUSEHOLD IS
A HOUSEHOLD OF PEACE

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FOREWORD

ONE of my students writes: "I very much hope that your next book will give us your study of the Sermon on the Mount. You should call it **THE HEIGHTS OF CHRISTIAN LIVING**. The Sermon was preached on the heights. It was filled with the most lofty thoughts. It sets forth the highest standard of Christian conduct and life."

We have followed his suggestion. We trust that all who may read the great Sermon through with us once again may feel some inspiration to leave the lower levels and to live with the Master on the higher planes of the Christian life.

This book is a sequel to *The Heights of Christian Blessedness* in that it continues the study of the Sermon on the Mount there begun. Its second chapter is a very brief summary of some of the things said in that volume. It proceeds upon the supposition that Jesus meant what he said and that he intended his disciples to live according to these rules. It is as pacifist and as literal in its interpretation as the preceding volume was. It tries to show clearly that if the Christian Church

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declares that war is un-Christian it must, to be consistent, denounce and renounce all participation in the un-Christian thing. The moment the Christian Church arrives at this position war will be outlawed and ended.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. *The Mountain-Top Sermon.* The Sermon on the Mount is the mountain-top sermon of all history. It was preached in the heights and it represents the heights of Christian living and spiritual experience. It has the heavens above it and the world beneath it. It has no suggestion of the dim religious light of cathedral aisles; it is flooded with the sunshine of God's love and grace. Its outlook is not limited by any inclosing or excluding walls. It has far horizons stretching beyond human sight on every side and reaching upward into the infinite blue.

2. *Its Setting.* With the mountain for a pulpit and the broad slopes of the mountain for the ranging tiers upon tiers of the congregation, the Sermon in the elevation of its thought and the sweep of its sympathy matched its surroundings, was worthy of its setting, and is the towering, unapproachable presentation of the fundamentals of the Christian faith. It has all the freshness of the morning air and all the freedom of God's out-

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of-doors. In that mountain solitude the Father's lavishness in nature's loveliness was apparent on every hand. The winds blew there, the birds flew there, the lilies grew there; and there it was that God's supreme revelation was given to man through the lips of his Son.

3. *Its Time.* The sermon was preached in the early dawn of the day, and it represented the dawn of a new era in the history of the race. It was preached in the spring of the year, and it has in it all the promise and the potency of new life for the world. The Sermon on the Mount is the Sermon of the Dawn and the Sermon of the Spring, a sermon full of new light and of new life for all men. It was preached by a young man, and it is the Sermon of Youth in the dawn of its powers and the springtime of its career. The Gospel according to Luke would lead us to think that this Sermon was preached directly after the appointment of the twelve apostles,¹ and it would have been altogether appropriate to have this statement of fundamental principles in the gospel which the apostles were to preach set forth at this time. There is all the enthusiasm of a new and untried movement in it. It is full of the vitality and the hopefulness

¹Luke 6. 12-20.

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and the boundless faith of youth. Its day has not declined, its strength has not abated, its harvest has not yet been gathered in. It is still the Sermon of the Dawn and of Youth and of Spring. The Sermon on the Mount always has been and it still is a source of inexhaustible inspiration to the successive generations of men.

4. *Its Place.* The tradition is that it was preached on one of the Horns of Hattin, not far from Capernaum, nine miles from Tiberias. There the preacher and the people could look down toward the east upon the flat roofs of the distant city and the blue waters of the shimmering Galilæan sea, and northward towered the snow-crowned summit of Mount Hermon, and off in the southwest lay Tabor, and all the plain of Esdraelon stretched away to the south. Here above the turmoil of the city streets and the toil of the fishermen and the farmer folk on the waters and in the fields below, on the green grass of the heights, with daisies, anemones, and hyacinths blooming here and there among the black basalt rocks, the Preacher took his seat and the people gathered about him to hear what he had to say.²

² The exact site is not known, and it never will be known. The Latin tradition we have quoted dates from the thir-

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5. *Its Hearers.* There were great multitudes of hearers, come from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judæa and beyond the Jordan.³ The Samaritans and the Greeks may not have been present but there were crowds of people from all the Jewish portions of Palestine. The Preacher was about thirty-one years old and he had been teaching and preaching for about eighteen months. He had gained quite a following, and he had just appointed twelve apostles to accompany him in his travels and assist him in his labors and attend to whatever organization his growing popularity might necessitate among the sympathetic and enthusiastic people. Evidently the time had now come to set forth his message more formally to the men of his generation and through them to the men of all time.

This is no esoteric instruction for a selected few, as Bacon and Burton have supposed. These sayings were not intended only for immediate and intimate disciples and simply overheard by the crowds gathered about their

teenth century only and represents probably nothing more than a plausible conjecture. Any mountain peak on the west or northwest shore of Gennesaret may have been chosen for the site of this Sermon. The Horns of Hattin meet the conditions and are as likely as any. Stanley, Plummer and others decide like ourselves to follow the tradition at this point.

³ Matt. 4. 25.

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inner circle, as Tholuck and Bernard Weiss have thought. Jesus stood on the mountain-side and his eye swept over the serried ranks of hearers on the mountain slopes, and his voice rang out over them all, and his thought included them all. This was the life for all men to live. Jesus addressed them all and appealed to them all.⁴ They never had heard such preaching. Their hearts never had been stirred after this fashion before.

6. *Its Simplicity.* The consummate genius of Jesus is apparent in the utter simplicity with which he presented his truth. His language is plain and clear. His thought is simple and understandable by all. There is no sesquipedalian terminology. There is no mystifying theosophy. There is no intricate theology. It is all clear as the mountain air, simple as the sunshine, just plain common sense which every man there could comprehend and practice if he would. The illustrations were drawn from the life familiar to all of them. The salt of their daily use, the lamp found in every house, the measures of the market place and the pearls of the peddler's merchandise, the dogs and the pigs, the flowers and the birds, the serpents and the stones,

⁴ This is the opinion of Bleek, Bruce, Godet, Meyer, Votaw, and others.

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food and drink, fish and bread, broad ways and narrow gates, good fruit and evil fruit, thistles and thorns, the sandy soil swept away in the flood and the solid rock unscathed in any storm—the people who listened knew all about these things and they remembered what he had said concerning them as they went about their daily toil.

The Sermon does not deal with scientific abstractions or metaphysical disquisitions or philosophical definitions. It has to do with the religious practices and the social customs and the natural phenomena with which all its hearers were acquainted. It has no involved reasoning and it gives no evidence of the pedantry of the schools. Its lessons are based upon neither learning nor logic, except the learning open to all in daily avocation and observation and the logic inevitable to all in daily experience and environment. Its power lies in its utter simplicity both of matter and style and in its ultimate intuition of essential spiritual truth.

7. *Its General Course of Thought.* It may be that portions of this Sermon had been spoken at other times and places, but at this time and place the Preacher gathers together the product of his previous thought and gives it a unified structure which it never had had

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before this time. It is a more formal and complete pronouncement than the people have yet heard. His theme is The New Kingdom which John the Baptist had prophesied as at hand and which he in turn had come to proclaim. He first discusses The New Citizens of this new kingdom, setting forth their character in the Beatitudes and then their influence under the figures of salt and light. That leads him, in the second place, to discuss The New Law which governs the character and accounts for the influence of the new citizens of the new kingdom. He declares that this law is not destructive of the old law, but interpretative of it and superseding it because it fulfills and perfects it, and he illustrated his thought in the cases of murder and adultery and divorce and perjury and retaliation and hatred of enemies. Then he went on in the third place to discuss The New Life of the new citizens of the new kingdom and he declared that it would be free from ostentation in almsgiving, in prayer, and in fasting, and that it would be free from selfishness and therefore free from anxiety. He added that it would be free from the critical temper and yet discriminating in its conduct, not foolish in dealing with men, but full of faith in the goodness of God. He climaxed this section

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with the Golden Rule. Then he closed with the three exhortations based upon the three illustrations of The Two Ways, narrow and broad, and The Two Prophets, the true and the false, and The Two Houses, built one upon the sand and one upon the rock.

There would seem to be a clear course of thought through the Sermon as it stands, although our report of it may be simply a summary of what was said at this time. It would not take more than twenty minutes to say all these things which Matthew has recorded and in all probability Jesus talked on this occasion for several hours. If the Sermon as recorded were simply a collection of unconnected apothegms it would be a treasure beyond compare. The Golden Rule, the Beatitudes, the Model Prayer would be priceless jewels if they stood alone. Every sentence in this Sermon is of value in itself, but we think that we can trace its connection with all that goes before or all that comes after and the Sermon seems to be one whole with unified structure and logical development of its thought.

8. *Its Pre-eminence.* It sets forth with crystal clearness the conception which Jesus had of the ideal life. Was Socrates the wisest man among the Greeks? Jesus was the wisest

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man the human race has seen. He is the supreme Lawgiver of all history. In this Sermon we have a summary of his teaching, and it is not to be equaled by the sayings of any other sage or seer. It represents supreme wisdom. It comprises ultimate truth. No other selection in the world's literature can parallel it or approach it in the comprehensiveness of its morals, the sublimity of its standard, and the simplicity of its expression. It is a complete code for Christian conduct. It sets forth all the beauties of Christian character and all the duties of the Christian life. Did John Stuart Mill say, "Not even now would it be easy to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeavor so to live that Jesus Christ would approve our life"?⁵ This Sermon shows us the life which Jesus would approve. It has been universally recognized as the highest standard of living ever presented to the race. All the future ages may be fully occupied in its realization, and its ultimate acceptance and attainment will mark the final goal of human history. The life set forth in this Sermon is not an easy life to live. It demands superhuman unselfishness. It demands a perfection like unto that of the

⁵ Mill, *Three Essays on Theism*, p. 255.

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Father in heaven. No man can attain unto these things of himself. No man will maintain these things without a profound theology.

9. *Its Theology.* It is quite usual for folks to say: "I do not believe in theology; I believe in the Sermon on the Mount. Why bother about dogmas and creeds? Why not be content with the religion of the Sermon on the Mount? There is no mysticism in that Sermon, nothing but plain morality. The Sermon on the Mount is sufficient for me." It is sufficient for any man, but it has more than mere morality. It has something to say about forgiveness of sins and likeness to God. It has much to say about faith and prayer. It is all based upon a profound belief in the being and the goodness of God. There is a deal of theology underlying it. There is a very definite creed demanded by it. No man can obey it fully without supernatural help, a mystical union with God which is quite another thing from man's unaided attainment of morality and far superior to it. Jesus had no conception of a morality which was not religious. The morals of this Sermon are the morals of the children of God.

With these implications of the Sermon in mind we may well say that the Gospels and the Epistles have little to add to the fullness

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of the revelation found in it concerning God's will for our lives, and in that sense the Sermon on the Mount may be an all-sufficient guide in the way of life and salvation. No developed doctrine of the person of Christ could have been presented at this time. There could have been no theological statement of the atonement and the time had not yet come for the prophecy of the resurrection from the dead. The later facts all gave their sanction to the statements of this Sermon, and the later faith founded on these facts came to know that the life pictured in the Sermon on the Mount could be realized only through and because of them. At this time only a preliminary statement could be made concerning the nature of the new kingdom and the character of its constituent membership. After the crucifixion and the resurrection and the experiences of Pentecost the disciples and the apostles were prepared to measure up to the high requirements of this Sermon on the heights of Hattin.

10. *Contrast With the Creeds.* In the Sermon on the Mount we have the authority of the Master himself. That cannot be said of any of the later creeds of Christendom. There is a marked difference between the Nicene and the Athanasian Creeds and the Augsburg

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Confession and the Westminster Catechism and the Wesleyan Articles of Religion on the one hand and the simplicity and the authority of this Sermon on the other. They move on different planes and they breathe a different atmosphere. The creeds are metaphysical and the Sermon is ethical. The creeds are interested in intellectual conceptions: Jesus is interested only in spirit and character.

Conceivably, one might be dissatisfied with all of the creeds and yet be willing to profess allegiance to the ideal of this Sermon. He might find it difficult to assent to the formulations of the faith in the later Church Councils and yet endeavor to maintain a clean heart and to attain the perfection of love in dependence upon the Father and in the faithful discipleship of Jesus. Such an one might be a heretic from the standpoint of orthodoxy and a saint from the standpoint of this Sermon.

11. *Its Contrast With Sinai.* It is always tempting to draw a contrast between the giving of the law on Mount Sinai and the giving of the new law on the Mount of the Beatitudes. There, in accordance with the Jewish tradition, Paul declares that the law was mediated by angels.⁶ Here there are no angels

⁶ Gal. 3. 19.

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except the angels of the sunshine and the spring breezes and the spring flowers and the birds flying from earth to heaven and from heaven to earth. They may be God's messengers to men, but their message is mediated through the lips of God's Son. As on the Mount of Transfiguration, so here on the Mount of the Beatitudes, the divine Voice might have declared to the multitudes, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."⁷ No manifestation of divine splendors here and no mediation of angels; only a young man sitting on the mountain slope and talking plainly to plain people.

In the day of the ancient lawgiving Sinai was a great and terrible mountain which burned with fire, and there was blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, and the voice was so awe-inspiring that they who heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more, for they could not endure to hear it; and so terrible was the sight that Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake."⁸ Could any contrast be greater than that with the scene here at the great Sermon? No thunder and lightning here; only the still small

⁷ Matt. 17. 5.

⁸ Heb. 12. 18-21.

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voice of One who promised blessedness and peace. The hundreds or possibly thousands of hearers were not fearful or repelled, but attracted to listen spellbound to the message of grace and of truth. The law was inaugurated in the fury of a tempest; the gospel is preached in the quiet of the spring morning and in all the glory of the spring sunshine.

Before the giving of the law there had been great prodigies of God's power, Egyptian plagues and Egyptian hosts drowned in the Red Sea. Before the great Sermon there had been miracles of mercy and a ministry of healing and love. The law was given in the desolate wilderness; the gospel is presented on the sunny slopes overlooking the fertile land about Gennesaret. The old law was written on tablets of stone; the new law is written only on the fleshly tablets of the heart. Moses veiled his face; Jesus with unveiled face reflected as a mirror the glory of the Lord.⁹ The old law began with prohibitions and threats; the new law begins with beatitudes and promises of eternal good. The old law was enforced by terrors and penalties; the new law attracts by its winsomeness and sweet reasonableness. There is a marked contrast between the old and the new dispen-

⁹ 2 Cor. 3. 13, 18.

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sation. There is a great difference between Moses and Jesus. John realized it when he wrote in the prologue to his Gospel, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."¹⁰

¹⁰ John 1. 17.

CHAPTER II

THE DISCIPLES' CHARACTER

THE people had wondered at the gracious words which proceeded from the mouth of this young evangelist. They had gathered on this day to hear more of them. They were not disappointed. He began with a series of blessings. The eight beatitudes with which his Sermon opened presented the character of the true disciple in God's kingdom and the rewards—and the persecutions which that character would be sure to have.¹

I. CHARACTER. The beatitudes do not present different classes of people who are blessed. They give different aspects of the one character to which blessedness is assured. Put together they form the complete portrait of the truly blessed man. All the promises attached to the several beatitudes apply to the one character in its many-sided manifestations. Each promise includes all spiritual blessing. Each beatitude can claim all the promises.

¹ A full discussion of the beatitudes will be found in the author's book, *The Heights of Christian Blessedness*.

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1. *Poor in Spirit.* Jesus began by saying, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,*" 5.3. His hearers knew something about the kingdom of heaven pictured in the Old Testament. Probably most of them thought that it would come apocalyptically. Jesus promises them now that it will be given to the poor in spirit and the persecuted for righteousness' sake. To these it may be a present possession.

Who are the poor in spirit who are to be thus blessed? They are the humble and the lowly in the land, who feel and acknowledge their constant dependence upon God and who are devoted to the kingdom of God and his righteousness in such a measure that they show a certain detachment from the motives which sway the worldly mind. They do not worry about wealth. They are rich in faith, rich in love, rich in good works. They are meek, but not spiritless or spineless. God blesses them and gives them his kingdom.

The poor in spirit would not desire above all things to be rich or to gain personal prominence and power. They would not be so self-reliant as to live a prayerless life. Their blessedness would be found in being the servants of all. This first beatitude challenged the serious thought of all who heard it. Were

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they too arrogant and haughty, too selfish and prayerless, to inherit the Kingdom? Must they be poor in spirit even to enter the royal palaces?

2. *Mourners.* Jesus went on to say, "*Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted,*" 5.4. His first statement had been startling: this second statement must have seemed pure paradox. How could blessedness be found in the midst of miseries and of the mourning caused by them? How could they be sorrowful and yet always rejoicing? They would not be blessed if their mourning was caused by any form of selfishness or sin: but mourning for any other reason might be accepted submissively and might be consistent with the consciousness of God's presence and of God's comfort and the experience of consequent spiritual victory.

If the mourning was in repentance for sin they might be comforted in the assurance that there was salvation from sin. If their mourning was caused by any other unavoidable calamity or disability, they might comfort themselves in the thought that God would make all things work together for their good. They would not mourn as those who had no hope. They would have present grace and the assurance of ultimate deliverance. They

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would be blessed with the presence and comfort divine.

Where must we look for true blessedness in the kingdom of heaven? Among those who are poor in spirit and among those who mourn. These are strange statements with which Jesus begins the great Sermon. The people who listened were poor, and they had mourned. They were hearing now that they might be among the most blessed of earth. What other characteristics must they have to qualify for membership in the new kingdom? Jesus went on to say, "*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth,*" 5. 5.

3. *Meek.* This statement may not have been so startling to these people as the others had been. They knew that the prophets and psalmists had said practically the same thing, and they knew that the greatest man in their history had been the meekest of men. The history of Moses had proved to them that great strength of character and great meekness of disposition were not inconsistent with each other, and the promises in the Psalms had filled them with great expectations concerning their final inheritance. They knew that the more pious would be the more likely to be meek.

The meekness of which the Master speaks

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will root itself in true humility. It will not be proud and self-sufficient. It will not be full of self-assertion. It will have courage and consecration. It will have self-control and will be ready for self-sacrifice. It will be characterized by patient endurance. It will suffer wrong without resorting to retaliation. It will be strong enough not to strike back. It will subjugate the instincts of the brute to the purposes of the spirit. It will be gentle in behavior and tranquil in trying conditions.

Jesus said that blessedness would be found in meekness rather than in arrogance and aggressiveness. It was easier for the Orientals who heard him that day to believe him than it is for the Occidentals of to-day: but the Occident must accept this wisdom of the Incarnate One, or the future welfare of the race will lie in the hands of the Orient, where this gospel first was heard and where it yet may find its most complete fulfillment.

4. *Hungry and Thirsty.* The fourth beatitude was quite as comforting and not quite so startling. "*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled,*" 5. 6. Hunger is very real. Thirst is very insistent in its demands. One can hunger for righteousness as much as for bread. One can thirst for the living God even

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as the hart thirsts for the water-brooks. Jesus promises here that the supply of spiritual manna shall be sufficient for each day's need. He promises that spiritual thirst shall be quenched in wells of water springing up into everlasting life.

The pangs of hunger are hard to bear. The tortures of thirst are almost unendurable. The keener the hunger for righteousness the surer the satisfaction will be. The more poignant the thirst for righteousness the more pleasant the realization of continuous and abundant supply. Other fountains fail: but they who come to this fountain are filled with all their souls' desire. Refreshing, inexhaustible, everlasting, their blessedness is assured as long as their thirst may last, for their thirst will be the measure of its supply. It is of the mercy of God that this is true. That may have suggested the next beatitude to Jesus.

5. *Merciful*. He said, "*Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy,*" 5.7. The mercy of God provides the filling promised in the last beatitude and the mercy of God suggests the blessedness of those who are merciful as God is merciful. The Old Testament had commanded mercy to both man and beast, and the Old Testament had promised that with the merciful God would show him-

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self merciful. This truth approves itself to the universal conscience. Rome had its temple dedicated to Kindness, and one of the oldest altars in Athens was the altar of Mercy. Buddhism is filled with the spirit of gentleness and pity and grace.

We might translate, "Blessed are those who cherish within them the spirit of pity," and we would come nearer the meaning of the Greek. Pity is the larger word. Mercy is only one form of the manifestation of pity. Deeds of mercy can be shown only upon suitable occasion. The spirit of pity may be always present. Jesus pitied all who suffered. He pitied and prayed for those who wronged him and crucified him. He pitied the ignorant and the erring. The compassionate Christ pitied all and was the friend of all.

In every community there are these compassionate people to whom the suffering and the needy turn at once for help or who seek out the suffering and the needy and are the first to know about them and to minister to them, God's ministers and God's blessed ones. Jesus was right when he said that they would be blessed far more than any hard-hearted, intolerant, and selfish souls. They have the secret of a happy life. They know life's supreme blessedness.

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6. *Pure.* Everybody would be ready to assent to the truth of the fifth beatitude and all would be equally ready to agree when they heard the sixth beatitude. Jesus said, "*Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God,*" 5. 8. Every man's heart would tell him that heart-purity was essential to the beatific vision. If he would ascend into the hill of the Lord or stand in his holy place, his own conscience would tell him that he must have clean hands and a pure heart. Those who would see the King in his beauty must be like the King's daughter, all beautiful within.

Without holiness no man can see God. There is the unqualified statement of an unchangeable truth. Heart-purity is the essential condition of fellowship with God and of recognition in his family. God can make the heart clean. As Jesus came down from the mountainside, having finished the great Sermon, a leper met him and said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Then Jesus touched him and his leprosy was cleansed from that hour. Leprosy was an incurable disease, but Jesus could cure it. The leprosy of sin is incurable by human power, but God can cleanse it. When Omnipotence commands it, the work is done.

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The pure in heart see God intuitively and immediately. They live in God's presence. They have direct and continuous communion with him. They endure as seeing him who is invisible to others. Reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, they are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. They have the beatific vision of the saints here and now, and some time they will have the perfect vision of the redeemed in the glory of the completed kingdom of the Son. They will see God face to face when they meet Jesus there.

7. *Pacifists.* On that peaceful spring morning on the mountainside the seventh beatitude may have seemed quite in harmony with the whole scene. It would have sounded differently in time of war; but would Jesus have changed his utterance in any degree if war had been raging anywhere upon the plain or anywhere in Palestine? He said, "*Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God,*" 5. 9. Our English version says, "Blessed are the peacemakers." The Latin version said, "Blessed are the pacifists." They are equally accurate translations of the original Greek.

Jesus himself was a pacifist, a peacemaker, on principle. He deliberately determined upon

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the pacifist policy, to be pursued at any cost. He faced the possibility of world conquest by the methods of militarism and decided that such a conquest was not possible for him; or, if it were possible, it would not be right. He had warrior blood in his veins and he had the example of the Maccabees in the recent history of his people, but he concluded that he would not have the kingdoms of the world if they had to be won by methods of violence and force. He would have them only if they were drawn to him and held to him by bonds of love.

His pacifism rooted itself in his loyalty to God, the God of peace. He knew that his kingdom, a kingdom of truth, never could be established among men by force of arms. He determined to die as the Prince of Peace rather than to live as a conqueror by means of war. He went to Calvary in that resolve. He believed that he would be the blessed child of God on no other basis. He believed that those who would follow his example in courageous and aggressive peace propaganda would be blessed with a filial consciousness like his own.

There is a peace of indifference and of impotence and of cowardice, and Jesus never said that those were blessed who were peace-

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ful because of any of these things. He did not say, "Blessed are the peaceful." He said, "Blessed are the peacemakers," which is quite a different thing. The peacemaker seeks peace and ensues it. He is active and energetic. He is no passive-ist. He is a warrior for the right, and he fights with the weapons of truth and love. God will recognize such a man as his son and he will bless every effort made by his son to bring those who were at war with each other or with him to be at peace together in him.

II. PERSECUTION. These seven beatitudes represent the various elements entering into the ideal character of the members of the kingdom of God. To them Jesus added another beatitude not upon any added element of character, but upon those who with the perfect character and because of it suffer persecution. The seven beatitudes are pronounced upon men for what they are and then an eighth is added for what may happen to them. In such a world as this the godly are sure to suffer persecution: so Jesus went on to say, "*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my*

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sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you,"
5. 10-12.

Persecution is not essential to blessedness, but it is compatible with it. The disciples of Jesus may maintain their blessedness in the face of any slander or reviling or persecution which may come upon them. They can rejoice and be exceeding glad in the midst of these things, for they can have the approval of God and they will be in the line of succession with the heroes of faith in the past. They must pay the penalty for being godly in a godless world; but they could suffer for righteousness' sake and be happy. They could rejoice that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Master's name.

Jesus declares that it is possible for a man to have the world against him and still know himself for a happy man. He is blessed beyond all other men in the presence and protection of God and in the consciousness of God's abiding approval upon his life. He knows that the condemnation of the world rests upon him simply because of the good there is in him and, like Moses, he esteems the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure of the world's approbation. He

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may go to the cross, but he will go with a crown.

The Christian character is blessed in itself, but it is sure to be persecuted in this world. So Jesus ends his list of beatitudes by saying that the persecution itself will bring a blessing. All that the Christian has within him will make him blessed. All that comes to him from without will only increase his blessing. He will be blessed in his saintliness. He will be blessed in his suffering. He is blessed, and he looks forward to greater blessedness. He will be blessed all the time. He may have reviling, but he will have reward. He may have persecution, but he will have peace of mind and purity of heart. He may have slander, but he may be a saint. He may have tribulation here, but he will have consolation here and coronation hereafter.

Seven beatitudes pronounced upon men for what they are and then the assurance added that their blessedness will not be precluded by what men may do to them. Their blessedness will be enthroned securely within themselves, and any attack from without will only increase their consciousness of it and their enjoyment in it. They will be blessed when not persecuted because the kingdom of heaven is within them. They will be blessed when

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persecuted because the kingdom of heaven will still be within them and no man can rob them of that treasure. They can be superior to circumstances. Their beatitude can be perfect, even in persecution and pain.

CHAPTER III

THE DISCIPLES' INFLUENCE

WHAT is such a man to do in a world like this? He is to live and to labor. He is to purify his environment and he is to illuminate his immediate neighborhood. He is to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. First Jesus pictured the ideal character of the citizens of the new kingdom. Now he speaks of their influence upon others. He likens it first to salt. *"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men,"* 5. 13.

I. SALT. 1. *Useful.* How surely would this figure appeal to those folks to whom Jesus was speaking! The fishermen salted the fish they sent to the markets. The housewives salted the food they prepared for the meals. The farmers used salt as a fertilizer. The traders dealt in salt every day. The incense and the burnt-offerings and the meal-offerings were all seasoned with salt, to preserve them

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and to keep them clean from corruption, in order that everything used in the worship of God might be pure and sound.

Jesus said, "Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt," and he immediately added, "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another."¹ The suggestion in the conjunction of those two clauses is that the pacifists are the salt of the earth. They preserve peace, as the children of God. The jingoists and militarists preserve nothing good, but destroy many spiritual values. The disciples of Jesus will be ready for any self-sacrifice and will have salt in themselves to preserve them from any uncleanness and to save the community in which they live from all corruption and decay. They will not be weakly amiable. They will be very irritating to those whose moral life is like an open sore. They will be decidedly unpleasant to those who desire to do or go wrong. It is the duty of the citizens of the Kingdom not to withdraw from human society, but to mix with it and to purify it by their personal contact and influence, in order that it may be prepared to be a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God.

Wherever corruption was apparent among men they were to be a purifying antidote. If

¹ Mark 9. 49, 50.

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politics began to smell to heaven, it was time to sprinkle a little Christian salt in the festering mass. If business began to be rotten in its methods and practices, it needed a good dose of Christian salt to restore it to respectability. If literature and art became foul in their processes and products, Christian influence was to be as a purifying salt upon them. Christians were to be the salt of society in all of its pleasures and pursuits.

2. *Savorless.* That would be true only as long as they themselves continued to be holy and acceptable. If they allowed the degenerating influences of the selfish and corrupt world about them to gain control over them, they would be like the rock salt in the neighborhood of the Dead Sea, which, under the stress of wind and weather, had at last lost its savor. It was of no use after that. It was fit only to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men. When the citizens lose their internal worth they are like savorless salt which outwardly may appear clean enough but inwardly has no saving or savoring quality. They are worse than useless. They do positive harm. The irreligious professor of religion is the one who does the cause of religion the greatest injury. The citizen with only half-hearted loyalty is the one who

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admits the enemy to the citadel. The luke-warm adherent, who is neither hot nor cold, is fit only to be spued out of the mouth. God rejects him. Men despise him. He is cast out of all decent society in heaven and earth.

Salt has a bitter taste, but savorless salt has no taste at all. Salt stings when applied to a fresh wound, but savorless salt is nothing but dirt and deserves to be thrown into the street to be trampled under the feet. Chemists have objected to this statement as an impossibility. Salt is chloride of sodium, and as long as it lasts it is salt and nothing but salt. Jesus was not talking as a chemist, but as a plain man concerning ordinary experience. The salt which he and his hearers knew and used was not a pure chemical compound, but a mixture of true salt with other things, and they all remembered from their daily experience that the true salt could be dissolved out of it and nothing left but a white powder which was useless and fit only to be thrown away.

The salt of the earth is a fertilizer. The most common use of salt is for seasoning. The Christian is not only to preserve society from putrefaction, but he is to add flavor to its life and make it palatable and pleasant. Paul said, "Let your speech be alway with grace,

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seasoned with salt,"² adding zest to conversation and enjoyment to all friendly intercourse. The Christian is to be not only antiseptic, but seasoning, giving flavor to existence and piquancy to experience, making life more worthy and therefore more worth while. His speech will be filled with grace and flavored with salt.

II. LIGHT. Pliny said, "There is nothing more useful than salt and sunshine." Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth," and then immediately added, "*Ye are the light of the world,*" 5. 14. Later he said, "I am the light of the world."³ He asked his disciples to be what he himself was. The citizens of the Kingdom would live as he lived. They would be all which they ought to be, and then their life would speak for itself. Suppose that the words of Jesus never had been recorded, but the record of his spotless life had been handed down among men; he would have been the light of the world even so. For thirty years he was satisfied with the witness of his daily life. It was a holy, godly life in all obscurity. Most of his followers have lived their lives in the comparative obscurity of daily drudgery, but as housewives and mothers, as carpenters

² Col. 4. 6.

³ John 8. 12.

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and citizens they have been the light of the world. Their silent influence has been for good and nothing but good. They have made their contribution to the enlightenment and the salvation of the world. In their communities they have been as cities set on a hill. As John Wesley said, "Love cannot be hid any more than light; and least of all, when it shines forth in action. . . . As well may men think to hide a city, as to hide a Christian; yea, as well may they conceal a city set upon a hill, as a holy, zealous, active lover of God and man."⁴

Who were these people to whom Jesus was speaking? For the most part they were peasants. They lived in mean houses. They were poorly clad. They were not particularly well fed. They were not university bred. They belonged to the rank and file of that provincial population. They were the obscure multitudes of whom the learned and the mighty in the empire would have taken no notice and from whom they would have expected nothing at all. It is to this crowd of awkward and uncultured and unknown people that Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth" and "Ye are the light of the world."

⁴ Wesley, *Works*, vol. I, p. 215.

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Would "the earth" and "the world" ever hear of them? If they incarnated the Kingdom the earth and the world would know it. In due time the empires would perish and their faith would survive. From those Jewish peasants would go forth purifying influences and spiritual light for all the continents and for all the ages to come. They were common people, but common people realizing the beatitudes will inherit the earth and illuminate the world darkness forever. It is the promise of "a gentleman who keeps his word."

III. CITY ON HILL. Where Jesus stood on the Horns of Hattin he could look across the valley to the city of Safed on its isolated hill, some twenty-seven hundred feet above the Mediterranean Sea, and thirty-five hundred feet above the lake. Safed was all the more noteworthy because in Galilee it was not common to find cities set on a hill. In Judea it was a quite usual sight, but not in this north country.⁵

From this mountain city the fiery signal was flashed to all the country round, announcing the appearance of the new moon each month. It was not only conspicuous in itself, but it was associated in the minds of all these

⁵ Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 429.

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peasants with this light phenomenon.⁶ With a sweeping gesture to the left which drew the eyes of all his congregation to the little city so conspicuous there on its height, Jesus said, "*A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.*" Then, to bring his thought still more closely home to their daily life, he went on to say, "*Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,*" 5.14-16. The light is lit only that it may shine.

"Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,
Not light them for ourselves: for if our
virtues
Did not go forth of us, 'twere all the same
As if we had them not. Spirits are not finely
touched
But to fine issues."⁷

1. *Compulsion of Duty.* Socrates had come to certain fine conclusions in theology, and when he was threatened with death as a perverter of the faith of the state, he said, "If they would spare my life on condition that I

⁶ Neubauer, *Geographie du Talmud*, p. 227.

⁷ Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, Act I, scene i.

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should keep this truth to myself and not teach it to others, I would not accept it." Some men are like John the Baptist, who was a burning and a shining light. Their shining consumes them. The giving of their light means the giving of their life. John the Baptist did not shrink from the consequences when he bore his witness to the truth. Neither did Socrates. Neither did Jesus. Neither did Peter and John. The citizens of the new commonwealth will not hide their lights under a bushel because of cowardice. They will give their testimony without flinching, because they will fear God rather than men.

2. *Quietness of Influence.* They will dissipate the darkness of doubt by the simple statement of the truth. They will know that doubt does not need a club, but a candle. They will dissipate the darkness of sin by the light of a holy life. They will know that sin does not need denunciation so much as illumination. They will invade the kingdom of this world darkness and they will expect it to become a world of light, not by violence and force but as gently and as effectually as the night is turned into day by the advent of the sun.

They will conquer not with Roman legions, but with Christlike love. They will not depend upon the sword and the spear: they will

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be supplied only with salt and with light. They will not use physical force and they will not need filthy lucre. They will propagate the truth by the contagion of character alone. They will not compel anybody to accept their creed, but they will influence everybody by the beauty and the simplicity and the consistency of their daily life. The sun is not selfish. It gives and gives without any thought of return. It does its good work and so glorifies its Creator. The ideal character does not shine for self-glorification. It does not do its good works for selfish ends. Those good works glorify the Father who is in heaven because they are done in the spirit of the beatitudes, the spirit of the poor and the mourning and the meek.

CHAPTER IV

THE DISCIPLES' RIGHTEOUSNESS

It was the spring of the year and the spring sunshine flooded the hills and made the sea below shine like silver. It was the dawn of the day and the birds were singing their morning hymn of praise over all the heights, and the lilies were lifting their flower faces toward the light in all the fields. It was a young man who stood here preaching that the hopes of all the ages were to be realized at last in the Messianic kingdom now at hand.

1. *Jesus the Radical.* He was a radical. He evidently was not satisfied with the old order of things. John the Baptist had said that he would lay the ax at the root of the tree. He was a revolutionist. The present regime did not suit him. He talked about a new kingdom, a kingdom of heaven which he was to establish upon earth. John the Baptist had said that he would burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. There was to be a new springtime of hope for the race, a new day for the world. Old things would pass away. All things would become new. The

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old must be destroyed, in order that the new may take its place. Let the old be set aside! Let youth now take the helm! Progress would become possible in that way. Paradise would be inaugurated in that fashion. Down with the old law, and up with the license of the new age!

“The Master stood upon the mount, and taught,
He saw a fire in his disciples' eyes.
‘The old Law,’ they said, ‘is wholly come to naught;
Behold the new world rise.’

“‘Was it,’ the Lord then said, ‘with scorn ye saw
The old Law observed by scribes and Pharisees?
I say unto you, see ye keep that Law
More faithfully than these.’

“‘Too hasty heads for ordering worlds, alas!
Think not that I to annul the Law have willed.
No jot, no tittle from the Law shall pass,
Till all shall be fulfilled.’”¹

2. *Jesus the Conservative.* That was wisdom incarnate in this young man. He was no bull in a china shop, smashing treasures and mak-

¹ Matthew Arnold, *Progress*.

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ing them fit only for the rubbish heap. He knew that true progress could be made only by building upon the firm foundations of the past. It was not the glory of the new faith that it was to be as unlike all which had gone before as was possible. It was to be the perfection and fulfillment of all the gathered good of the preceding days. The voice of God was to be heard in the law. The word of the Lord had come to the prophets. The ancient Scriptures contained a divine revelation to the race. Absolute originality in a new revelation would be no guarantee of its worth. It would, rather, be a proof of its falsity. All the good of the past must find its consummation in any new revelation from God. Its superiority will be shown only as it perfects and fulfills all the past had promised and had not attained. Brute strength can wield an ax. Mere malice can set afire and destroy. Only the highest order of constructive genius can carry on the best effort of the past to some fuller fruition.

Any man can break with precedent and smash with passion and zest. It takes supernatural grace to cleave to that which is good in the face of any fate and to fill it full of meaning by living it in love. That was the mission of Jesus. He would not devote him-

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self to the destruction of the false, but, rather, to the establishment of the true. He believed in evolution rather than revolution, in educating rather than reducing, in fulfilling rather than destroying. He said, *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled,"* 5. 17, 18.

3. *Jesus and the Law.* (1) *How fulfill?*

Jesus would fulfill the purpose of the law and the prophets by perfecting it. He would incarnate the will of God as represented in the Old Testament. He would accomplish that will in his own person and teaching. He would not literally enforce all of the Old Testament regulations. He would not literally carry out all of its Messianic program. He would bring to perfection all of its spiritual truth. In him its whole spirit would find ideal expression. It was all fulfilled in love, and his life would be the life of perfect love.

The Jews believed in the literal inviolability of the whole of the law. They said, "Everything has its end, the heaven and earth have their end; only one thing is excepted, which has no end, and that is the law."² They

² Bereshith R. 10. 1.

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taught, "Not a letter shall be abolished from the law forever."³ They said of the law that it "shall remain in perpetuity for ever and ever."⁴ The immediate context in the remainder of this chapter shows that Jesus did not use these words with this meaning. He abrogates certain portions of the law by his own authority. He is thinking here of the law and the prophets only so far as they represent the unchanging will and truth of God.

(2) *Abiding Element.* There was an element of absolute perpetuity in the law. It partook of the nature of God himself, the great Lawgiver. The earth was his footstool. The heaven was his throne. As long as his throne was set in the heavens his law would be in force upon the earth. God's law was God's self. It would last as long as the God who gave it. It was as inviolable as he. Not a jot nor a tittle, not a yod, which was the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet; not an *lōta*, which as *lōta* subscript is the smallest letter in the Greek alphabet; not a *κερία* or horn, which is only a part of a letter in the Hebrew alphabet, one of the little protuberances or projections which differentiates

³ Shemoth R. 6.

⁴ Midrash Koheleth, 71. 4.

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one Hebrew letter from another; not one of these tittles should pass away from the law before its eternal validity had been established in its consummate fulfillment. The law of which Jesus here speaks is "*the* law," the spiritual and ideal law, the law enthroned in his own heart and representing the very heart and mind and will of God.

He is not thinking of the letter of the law as the rabbis did when they said that anybody who changed Daleth into Resh in Deut. 6. 4 would shake the universe, for by so doing he would make God not "one" but "false"; and whoever would change Cheth into He in Lev. 22. 32 would shake the universe, for by so doing he would make the Scripture read, "Thou shalt not praise the name of the Lord," instead of "Thou shalt not profane the name of the Lord."⁵ The Jews had a tradition that when Moses ascended to heaven to receive the tables of the law he found Jehovah engaged in putting the tittles to the letters of the Torah. This reverence for the letter of the divine revelation Jesus now appropriates for the spirit of it.

The essence of the law was as inviolable as the being of the Lawgiver himself. Jesus would fulfill it by obeying it, and he would

⁵ *Vajikra Rabba*, f. 162, 1.

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fulfill it by perfecting it. He would show its real meaning and he would give it an ideal form, not needing amendments, as the Old Testament law did, but at last made perfect, full. As the seed finds its fulfillment in the plant and the flower, so Jesus would fulfill the law by giving it its perfect development in Kingdom flowering and fruit. There could be no kingdom of heaven without the law of God. He who was without the law was without the Kingdom. Therefore Jesus said, *"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven,"* 5. 19.

(3) *Spiritual Truth.* This sounds like bibliolatry of the extreme type. It seems to be the worship of the letter carried to the last extreme. It would be such if Jesus had the book alone in mind. He is not thinking of the book except as it contained the record of the law of God and some of the utterances of the true prophets of God. The truth of God was imperishable. No least portion of it ever would fail. There were parts of the book which had to do with other things. There was an admixture of human error in its histories

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and its scientific statements and its legal requirements and its ecclesiastical rulings. Jesus was ready to brush these aside with all the ruthlessness of any modern higher critic. He proceeds to do it in more than one instance in this Sermon, much to the horror of some of the Fundamentalists among his hearers, no doubt.

He was neither obscurantist nor iconoclast. He had little reverence for the multiplied rules of the priests. He observed the rites and ceremonies of his people for the most part, but he disregarded the manual of current religious etiquette on more than one occasion, and he did so with perfect composure.

(4) *Law Observance*. In the account of the healing of the woman with the flow of blood, we learn that he wore on his garment the fringe prescribed by the law,⁶ and this tassel of the tallith is mentioned again when the multitudes ask for the privilege of touching it.⁷ He commanded the lepers to show themselves to the priest and to offer the sacrifices which Moses had enjoined.⁸ He paid the Temple tax rather than to give offense to the authorities.⁹ He told his disciples to do and

⁶ Matt. 9. 20.

⁷ Matt. 14. 36.

⁸ Mark. 1. 44.

⁹ Matt. 17. 27.

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observe the things bidden by the scribes and Pharisees who sat in Moses' seat.¹⁰ He was in deepest sympathy with the spirit of the ancient legislation and prophecy; for he was sure that it embodied the Spirit of God.

(5) *Disregard of Tradition.* On the other hand he persistently ignored the rules and regulations of the scribes concerning the observance of the Sabbath¹¹ and the distinguishing between the clean and unclean meats¹² and the association with publicans and sinners;¹³ for he was sure that these things misrepresented the love and the law of God.

He goes on in this sermon to criticize the Mosaic code, but he does it only to fulfill and perfect the will of God which it only imperfectly and partially had presented. Did that constitute him a blasphemer? Possibly some of those who heard him that day believed that it did. They thought that their formal worship made them righteous, but Jesus knew that real righteousness came from within and never was established by any performances without. Therefore he added, "*For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and*

¹⁰ Matt. 23. 2, 3.

¹¹ Mark 2. 23 to 3. 6. Matt. 12. 1-14. John 5. 16-18.

¹² Mark 7. 1-23. Matt. 15. 1-20.

¹³ Mark 2. 16, 17.

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Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven," 5. 20.

4. *Righteousness of the Pharisees.* The scribes and the Pharisees were the professedly pious people of that day. They were the accepted types of religious faith and practice. It was a high standard, that of a righteousness which would exceed theirs. Was Jesus really more righteous than they? Augustine thought that Jesus fulfilled the law by keeping it perfectly; but Pharisees did that. Saul the Pharisee said that as touching the righteousness which is in the law he was blameless.¹⁴ The rich young ruler told Jesus that he had kept all the commandments from his youth up.¹⁵ There were very good people among the Pharisees, just as good as they knew how to be. Some of them were very lovable people too. We are told that Jesus looked on the young ruler and loved him.¹⁶

The word "Pharisee" is not in good standing with us. We think of a Pharisee as a hypocrite; but that is only because Jesus put those three names together in his speech, "Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites." When he did that he was addressing only certain individuals in the

¹⁴ Phil. 3. 6.

¹⁵ Luke 18. 21.

¹⁶ Mark 10. 21.

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class, and he never intended to say that every Pharisee was a hypocrite. Some were not; but their name is in bad repute among us still. No one to-day would like to have it said that he or she was a Pharisee. Yet many who would be offended if called by that name are not good enough to deserve the title, as is apparent to anyone who stops to consider the matter long enough to see what it stood for in the days of Jesus.

The Pharisees, as their name suggests, were the Separatists among the religious people. They were stricter than others in the observance of religious duties. Their righteousness exceeded that of other religious folks. They were generally esteemed to be the most holy men of that day. The Pharisee of the parable who went up into the Temple to pray was intended by Jesus to be typical of the class. We have no reason to think that he was a hypocrite. He may have been a very sincere man. He thought that he was very much better than the most of the men in his nation, and with a clear conscience he stood up before God and told him so; and he was right. He was a more righteous man than most of the men then and than many men are now, as any study of his character will show.

(1) *Churchmember.* In the first place, he

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belonged to church. He publicly identified himself with the institution which stood for righteousness and pre-eminent righteousness in the community. If the church is a good institution and is the saving salt of the nation, any man who has the good of the nation at heart and is in sympathy with the forces which work for righteousness in the community ought to be identified with it. Many a man who has a perfect contempt for this Pharisee falls below his standard in this first particular.

(2) *True to Conviction.* In the second place, this Pharisee could say, "I am not as other men are." John Wesley used to say: "This is not a small point. It is not every man who can say this. It is as if he had said, 'I do not suffer myself to be carried away by that great torrent, custom. I live not by custom, but by reason; not by the examples of men, but by the word of God.' . . . Are we so? Do we desire to be singular at all? Do we not, rather, swim with the stream? Do we not many times dispense with reason and with religion together, because we would not look particular? Are we not often more afraid of being out of fashion, out of the social swim, than out of the way of salvation? Have we courage to stem the tide? To run counter

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to the world? To obey God rather than man? Otherwise this Pharisee leaves us behind at the very outset. It is well if we overtake him any more." In *The Poet at the Breakfast Table* Oliver Wendell Holmes has made some very sensible remarks about this parable. He says, "The parable of the Pharisee and the publican is a perpetual warning against spiritual pride. But it must not frighten any one of us out of being thankful that he is not, like this or that neighbor, under bondage to strong drink or opium, that he is not an Erie Railroad manager, and that his head rests in virtuous calm on his own pillow. If he prays in the morning to be kept out of temptation as well as for his daily bread, shall he not return thanks at night that he has not fallen into sin as well as that his stomach has been filled? I do not think that the poor Pharisee has ever had fair play, and I am afraid that a good many people sin with the comforting, half-latent intention of smiting their breasts afterward and repeating the prayer of the publican." This Pharisee was not as other men, and the chances are that he knew that he was better than other men in many respects.

(3) *Using Means of Grace.* In the third place, this Pharisee was very regular in his

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observance of all the church ordinances and in the use of all the means of grace. He attended all the sacrifices. He was present at all the services. He fasted twice a week. Who does anything of that sort now? He read the Scriptures at home and he heard them in the synagogue. He prayed both in public and in private prayer. In this jazz and flapper age to which we belong who spends much time in prayer and Scripture reading?

A young man who had been in service in the Orient said to me: "In all the cities there I saw men praying at all times of the day, on the streets and in the mosques. Then I came back and stood on State Street, Chicago, and watched the hurrying crowds by day and by night, and I declare that there seemed to be less reverence and devotion and religion here than in the Orient." We are reminded of what Wesley said again. "Are Christians any better than other men? Are they better than Mohammedans or heathens? To say the truth, it is well if they are not worse—in many respects they are abundantly worse. But then, of course, they are not properly Christians. The generality of those that bear the Christian name do not know what Christianity is." It seems like a harsh judgment from that gentle spirit, but the so-called Christianity of

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Wesley's day gave abundant proof that his judgment was a judgment of truth.

A century later Frederick Denison Maurice, another gentle and truthful and saintly soul, said of his day, "Nothing is more common than to meet people who emphatically describe themselves as Christians, and talk about Christianity. Nothing is more rare than men who in their decisions and acts are guided by the Christian spirit." Samuel Butler pictures a prosperous group of farm folk who were inclined to be conservative and who would be equally shocked to hear Christianity doubted or to see it practiced. One of Oliver Wendell Holmes' characters in *The Professor at the Breakfast Table* says, "Can any man look round and see what Christian countries are now doing, and how they are governed, and what is the general condition of society, without seeing that Christianity is the flag under which the world sails, and not the rudder that steers its course?"

In the most up-to-date English dictionary the last in the list of definitions given to the word "Christianity" is "conformity to the teachings of Christ in life and conduct" and this definition is marked "rare." Will some later dictionary mark it "obsolete"? How much of truth is there in that saying of Ches-

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terton, "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and not tried"? The church needs to be converted to Christianity. It needs to be honest in its adoption of the principles of Jesus. It needs to be freed from its worship of Mammon and come back to the fearless and uncompromising worship of God. It needs to renounce militarism and all its works and believe in the example and the teaching of the pacifist Jesus. Until it does that it will have a name to live while it really has left its first love and is dead in its backsliding and sins.

As long as its conduct shows that it has more faith in worldly means than it has in spiritual methods it shares in the condemnation and the fate of the sinful minister of whom Wesley says, "He is a murderer indeed; yea, the murderer general of his congregation. He peoples the regions of death. He is the choicest instrument of the prince of darkness. When he goes hence, 'hell from beneath is moved to meet him at his coming.' Nor can he sink into the bottomless pit, without dragging a multitude after him."¹⁷

(4) *Tither*. Let us go back to that Pharisee of the Lord's parable for a moment. He gave tithes of all of his income to the good

¹⁷ Wesley, *Works*, vol. i, p. 225.

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causes of benevolence and religion. There are a few in every community to-day who tithe their income for charitable uses, but they are in a vast minority, and all of those who fail to reach this standard in their giving are below the standard set by this Pharisee! In philanthropy, charity, good works, in the use of the means of grace and the scrupulous observance of all the ordinances of religion and of all the requirements of external righteousness that Pharisee was far superior to most people in the church and in the community to-day. He might have looked at most of us, even as he looked at that publican, and said, "I thank God that I am not as other men are."

The Pharisee was a hypocrite, we say. He was a churchmember, faithful to all his church duties, generous in his giving, unashamed of his practice of piety, standing out stoutly against all the irreligion of his age. We must stand upon that platform before we can be sure that he does not look down upon us. The man who stays with the crowd outside of the church has not the courage of the Pharisee. The man who comes short of the tithe in his giving has not the generosity of the Pharisee. The man who belongs to the church and neglects its ordinances and its services has not the faithfulness of the Pharisee. The man

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who professes to be a Christian and is not a Christian in his business or his politics or his life is as much of a hypocrite as any Pharisee.

The Pharisee trusted in himself that he was righteous and despised others. Do we consider all foreigners as a little inferior? Do we look down upon anybody with color? Do we condescend to those of lesser education or lower social rank? Then we are despising others as much as any Pharisee. There is surely as much hypocrisy in modern civilization as there ever was in ancient Pharisaism. If we are no better than the Pharisees in our self-conceit and our hypocrisy, it would be well for us to emulate their virtues and have a righteousness equal to theirs at any rate. Yet that would not satisfy the Master. It was as though he looked in upon a board of bishops or a theological faculty or a synod of church officials and then said, "I know that these stand for the types of piety in the community in which you live, but nevertheless I say unto you that if you would be my disciples your righteousness must exceed the righteousness of these men."

hypocrisy

It must have been startling to those first hearers to know that the righteousness of the religious leaders was not satisfactory and that to enter the kingdom of heaven one must

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be better than they. How could they be better? By fulfilling the law? No, that might make them just as good, but no better. How then? By incarnating the beatitudes. Some Pharisees may have done that, but not many. It was not characteristic of their body as a whole. Jesus desired his disciples to be poor in spirit and meek instead of self-conceited and arrogant. He asked them to be pure in heart and sincere in motive instead of ostentatious and hypocritical. He demanded that they be as good as the Pharisees and then very much better.

The Pharisees were good enough to meet the standards of that day, but the disciples of Jesus must be transcendently good. Ordinary goodness would not do. Exceeding goodness must mark the citizens of the new kingdom of God. Their righteousness must exceed and supersede the righteousness deemed sufficient in their day.

CHAPTER V

THE DISCIPLES' EXCEEDING RIGHTEOUSNESS

MOST people are afraid of being too good. They would like to be good enough to pass muster in decent society, but they would not like to become notorious for their goodness. They would like to be pious, but not unco-pious. They are glad to belong to the church, but they would not for the world have it thought or said that they belonged to a holiness association. Yet what is any true church but an association to help people to be holy and to keep them so? They would like to be respectable, but not for the world would they be saints. Ever anxious to have a good standing with their fellows, they are not so anxious to be pleasing in all things unto God.

The Pharisees were churchmembers. They were respectable citizens and pillars of society. Yet Jesus said, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Natural goodness will not be enough. The goodness

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represented by the typically pious Jew of that day will not be enough. The goodness of the members of the Kingdom must be more spiritual, more inward, not only free from outward evil acts but also free from cherished evil thoughts and motives. The righteousness of ritual must be replaced with the higher righteousness of unselfishness and forgiveness and love.

It is as if Jesus were saying, "I show you a more excellent way, the way of love. Your righteousness must be not only the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees but something more. It must be the righteousness of your Father in heaven, the righteousness of forgiving love and ungrudging service, the righteousness of unmerited and yet never-failing good-will. You are to be lights in the world. The light does not choose to shine upon some objects and not upon others. It shines upon all alike. The rain does not fall upon some spots and not upon others. It falls upon all alike. Your righteousness is to be like the righteousness of the Father's love which manifests itself to the evil and the good, the unjust and the just, to all alike. Legal righteousness must be exceeded by the inward righteousness of creative, aggressive, triumphing love."

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I. RECONCILIATION. Jesus illustrated this truth in several particulars. He began with the sixth commandment, the law against murder. No member of the Kingdom could be satisfied with having his hands clean of his brother's blood. He could be satisfied only when he and his brother were at one. He must seek for reconciliation and not for revenge. It is the way of the world to return injury for injury, to demand life for life. It is the way of the Kingdom to forgive and to love and to make atonement for all wrongdoing on either side. It is the way of the world to abrogate the sixth commandment in time of war and kill and kill and kill without mercy and without measure until millions of dead bear their silent witness to the madness of such folly and sin.

It is the way of the Kingdom to reason and to preach, to evangelize and to love until individuals and communities and nations are saved from the horrors of war and the dangers of its swift judgment and the certainties of its hellfire. It is the way of the world to be angry and to lose all reason and self-control and then to call its enemies hard names and to provoke them into retaliatory measures and the uttermost farthing in revenge. It is the way of the Kingdom to be gentle in spirit and

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meek in manner and merciful and peacemaking, until all reconciled brothers are disarmed and bring their gifts together to the altar of the Lord.

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing,” 5. 21-26.

Surely those who heard Jesus that day would understand that he was illustrating the righteousness which would exceed that of the

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scribes and the Pharisees, the righteousness which would represent the spirit of the beatitudes, the righteousness which would make them the salt of the earth and the lights of the world. It would be perfectly apparent to them that they were to be neither murderers nor malicious. They were not to cherish anger unexpressed. They were not to express their anger in any contemptuous epithet, such as *Raca*, an empty, vain, foolish man, and much less in a term like *More*, which would mean that the brother was contumacious and rebellious, a man without sense, character, or piety. They were to be really religious in their dealings with everybody. They were to treat all their neighbors with genuine goodness. They were to be pure in heart and peaceable in life, not provoking any brother to anger, but reconciling all brothers in love. Their standard was to be not that of law observance, but of love control. Their motives and their speeches and their actions were all to be the expression and the inevitable outcome of their love.

1. *Anger. Allowable?* With this one lesson clearly in mind, those first hearers would not be likely to indulge in meticulous objections such as modern students have evolved. They would not be likely to ask, "Is it right to be

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angry for any cause?" The answer to that question is to be found in the example of Jesus. He was angry more than once in his ministry, but his anger never caused him to lose his self-control. He indulged in plain speech. He rebuked without hesitation. His looks betrayed his indignation. His tones were those of righteous wrath. Yet he never struck a blow at any man. He never was provoked into the use of violence and of force in dealing with his fellows. He was master of himself and of the situation all the time. The Stoics were apathetic at the sight of gross injustice and brutal oppression. They discouraged all emotional excitement of any kind. Jesus was no Stoic. His spirit was stirred to deep indignation at the callousness and the indifference of the Jews. He was angry with them because of the hardness of their hearts. Any man who has the spirit of Jesus will be angry when he sees any exhibition of cruelty and injustice; but his anger never will run into blind and uncontrolled rage and never will do anything which afterward needs to be repented of as too rash or too harsh or as working any ill to his brother. His anger will spring from holy love and will use nothing but the methods of love and will aim only at the ends of love.

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2. *Sinner or Sin?* Is any distinction to be made between the sinner and his sin? Are we to love the sinner and hate the sin? Augustine seemed to think that such a distinction could be made, but it is more than doubtful whether it can be carried into practice with any real efficiency. The sinner is a reality and the sin apart from the sinner is an abstraction. The sinner identifies himself with the sin. He is responsible for it, and it has no existence apart from him. Jesus was angry with the people in the synagogue because they hardened their hearts, and not with any hardness of heart conceivable apart from them. He was angry with the traders in the Temple and not with any profanation of the Temple apart from them. Jesus was angry with Peter when he said, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Peter was an offense to him and not any abstract spirit of disobedience to the Father.

The anger of Jesus was consistent with love. It was caused by jealous love, love of the Father's honor and of the Father's house and of the Father's will. It was consistent with love to the sinning brethren, the indifferent Jews, the sacrilegious tradesmen, the wrong-headed Peter. Jesus loved them all and did all he could for all of them to show them their

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wrong and to lead them into the right. He hated none of them. He was angry with them, but he loved them all the time, and he labored incessantly for their restoration to the Father's favor in their reception of the Father's love.

3. *Sin, in Words?* Can we never use these terms, "Raca" and "fool," without sin? It is a foolish question. One is tempted to answer, "Thou fool, dost thou not see that the whole context has made it clear as the sunlight that it is not this or that word which one uses which makes him a sinner, but sin is born and resides in the motive and in the heart?" If a man deserves to be called Raca, and it is likely to do him good to know that all men agree that that is his proper appellation, it may be one's bounden duty to din that name into his ears until he is ashamed and repentant. If a man is a patent fool, a truthful man may be constrained to call him by that name.

Jesus said that the rich man in the parable who laid up treasure for himself and was not rich toward God was a fool.¹ He said that the hypocritical Pharisees were blind fools;² and he was right in that judgment and he was justified in speaking it out. Then why was

¹ Ἀφρων, Luke 12. 20.

² μωροὶ καὶ τυφλοὶ Matt. 23. 17.

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he not in danger of hellfire? Because he was not speaking the words of anger and of malice and of ungoverned passion, but the words of soberness and truth and love. No one is in danger of hellfire who uses only such words. The words themselves are not dangerous. It is the spirit which prompts them which makes them the instruments of life or the instruments of death.

4. *Order of Service.* Would we bring our gifts to God's altar? Have we any adversaries who have just claims upon us? Then it would be better for us to come to some terms of agreement with them and be reconciled with our brethren before we enter into our proposed religious exercises. Our gifts at the altar will not put us into their good graces. They will think that we ought to pay up our just obligations before we give anything away. All our church benevolences will not deter them from legal proceedings against us, and if they exact the last farthing the law will allow it is only what we deserve at their hands. We ought first of all to straighten out all our accounts with our neighbors. We cannot make things straight with God as long as things are crooked with our neighbors.

If we come to the altar and there remember that our brother has anything against us,

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we ought not to proceed with that act of worship. We ought to rise and go and find our brother and be reconciled to him before we attempt to become at one with God in his temple. The psalmist had said that no man was fit to abide in the holy place of God's worship who did not walk uprightly and work righteousness and speak the truth in his heart, and that man surely was unfit who was a backbiter, doing evil to his neighbor and taking up a reproach against his neighbor.³ Philo wrote a treatise "On Those Who Offer Sacrifices," and in it he said, "It is necessary for those who are about to go into the temple to partake in the sacrifice to be pure in body and soul and also to be adorned with virtues expressed by praiseworthy actions. But let him whose heart harbors covetousness and a desire of unjust things cover his head in shame and be silent. Truly the temple of the living God may not be approached by unholy sacrifices."

It is in the same spirit that Jesus now says that acceptable worship is dependent upon precedent conduct. First reconciliation, then the registering of vows. First, peace with the brethren, then the payment of tithes unto God. First, good-will in the community, then gifts

³ Psa. 15. 2, 3.

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at the altar. First, go and get right with everybody as far as you can, then come and worship as much as you please. Has your brother aught against you? Then go to him at once. Do not wait for him to come to you. Half the blessing will be lost to you if your doing right comes as the result of his complaint or his exaction. Go to him at once and surprise him with your presence and your proposition. Half the battle will be won if you take him off his guard and forestall all prejudice and suspicion by the openness of your approach and the directness of your appeal for good will between you.

It may seem like a small matter which has caused your estrangement, but it is sufficient to make him doubt the sincerity of your religious profession. He will have no faith in you or the church until his distrust is removed by the expulsive power of a new affection. It may be a small matter, but it may have great consequences for both him and the entire community. He may have been as much to blame as yourself. He may be ungracious and ungrateful and unreasonable. Everybody may sympathize with you in the quarrel. However, he has something against you. You have not treated him quite as a brother ought to have treated a brother. He knows it and he will

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continue to bear a grudge against you as long as he lives, unless you make the first advances and win him by the kindly offices of love. Make everything right with him as fast as you can. Never keep an enemy if you can honorably turn him into a friend. Possibly he will refuse to be reconciled, but if so your duty will be done and he will know it and the whole neighborhood will know it, and they will respect you all the more highly for his meanness of disposition, and you can worship with clean hands and a pure heart and your gifts will be acceptable to God.

When the church has no murderers in it, no one responsible for adulterated foods which slowly sap the vitality of multitudes until an epidemic sweeps them away, no owners of unsanitary tenements where the poor contract disease and die like flies in hot weather, no employers refusing to put up safety appliances although scores and hundreds of workmen are killed every year, no one guilty of that greatest crime of the centuries, the deliberate and cold-blooded sanctioning of wholesale slaughter in fratricidal wars; when the church is filled with peacemakers, at peace with their brethren and at peace with God, whose exceeding righteousness will reconcile all opposition and whose gifts will glorify

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the Father who is in heaven because there is no other claim upon them and they are ungrudgingly returned to him, that church will be a light in the world and the saving salt of the race, and its renown will go forth through the earth and nations shall be brought into it until the whole world has acknowledged its Master as Lord.

II. PURITY. Did the old law forbid murder? In the new kingdom murder will be rendered impossible by the universal fellowship of reconciliation inaugurated among its members. They will live in peace together, and they will live in purity. That is the second illustration Jesus introduced in his Sermon. *"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. It hath been said, Whosoever*

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shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery," 5. 27-32.

1. *The Sinful Look.* Did the law forbid adultery? Jesus forbids the adulterous look and thought, not as equally harmful but as equally sinful. Augustine assures us that "it is not the looking at a woman, out of which, unawares to the beholder, there rises up in his heart the suggestion of an unholy desire, which constitutes a man guilty of adultery; but the looking with the intention and purpose of thereby feeding desire." The form of the Greek phrase here is the same as that in the first verse of the sixth chapter. The Pharisees do their righteous acts before men, in order that they may be seen of them. So here the man looks upon the woman in order to lust after her, in order to stimulate his passion, in order to foster and inflame his evil desire.

Tholuck and Tait agree with this interpretation. Dean Alford and Bishop Gore come to the same conclusion. Alford says that the phrase "must not be interpreted of the casual

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evil thought, which is checked by holy watchfulness, but the gazing with a view to feed that desire." Gore declares, "Our Lord says that to will to sin and deliberately to stimulate sin in oneself has in his sight all the guilt of sin, even though circumstances may restrain one from the actual commission of it."

In the "Parson's Tale" Chaucer says, "Foul-looking is the first of the five fingers on the hand of the devil by which he catches people to throw them into the furnace of hell." There is no sin in the use of the sight. The sin is not in the look but in the cherished motive or desire behind the look. Temptation is unavoidable. It assails one unawares. The most decent man is tempted wherever he goes, by his newspaper and his magazine, by billboards and by books, in the theater and in the dance and on the street, by the indecent display of female charms, by the wanton look or act. There is no escape for a man who has his eyes open. Temptations pour in through his eyes like a flood.

Can a man remain pure in such an environment? It would seem next to impossible. Jesus did it; and he asks his disciples to do it. He always was asking men to do the impossible. What is impossible to men is possible to God. He can give supernatural grace.

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He can fill a man's heart with such a love of purity that the very thought of impurity fills him with loathing and disgust. He can fill a man's mind with such an overflowing of good will to every man and every woman that it never would occur to him to wrong them by any impure thought or act. He can strengthen a man's will until it becomes like adamant against the assault of any evil impulse or desire.

He can give a man such a peace in believing and such a joy in service and such a hope in an uttermost salvation that the man will purify himself even as Jesus was pure and he will walk even as Jesus walked in the midst of the world's sin and surrounded by the world's myriad incitements to lust and to inordinate desire, and yet was the Crystal Christ, the Spotless One, the Sinless Saviour of men. The Christian is a Christ-man among men. They may be cynical and blasé and skeptical of perfect purity in any one. By the grace of God he can show them the realization of what they deem impossible to frail human nature in a world as wicked as this. He can prove the possibility of perfect purity of heart and cleanness of life in any legitimate calling and necessary environment.

The price of his purity will be eternal vigi-

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lance. His security will be found in unceasing prayer. He must be protected by God's panoply or he will be pierced by the fiery darts of evil desire. He must be on his guard all the time. Only by persistent holy watchfulness can he see all these temptations to evil and yet allow no one of them to find an entrance to his will or a permanent lodgment in his heart.

2. *Limitation.* It would be better for him to be half-blind than to be hell-bound. A man with one eye can be pure in heart and can see God. It would be better to have his sight limited in many respects than to have two eyes and so use them as to be plunged into sin. "Come and see the sights! Come and see the old town at night! You do not half know this world you live in! Come and see how the under half lives!" It is strange how the sights of a city are so often the sins of the city, the night sights, the sights which shun the light of the day and the cool air of the morning, but flourish in the fever of the late hours under electric illumination. The children of the light walk in the day and are satisfied. They may see only half the sights of the city, but they are content with that abridgment of their memories and that curtailment of their faculties and that limitation

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of their activities. They would rather lose it all than lose their fellowship with God. They would rather cast their right eyes or their right hands from them than to be cut off from him. Any sacrifice of that sort would be profitable in the end. If mortification begins in a single member, it is safer for the whole body to have it cut off. That is the only way to save the life, sometimes; and a saved life is better than the sparing of one member. Does this age claim to be one of largest liberty? Do our associates call upon us to enjoy all the pleasures which the world and the flesh and the devil have to offer? Do they exhort us to have our fling and try everything once at least and know all there is to know in life and its mysteries and miseries? Do they talk about repressions and complexes and preach self-expression and self-indulgence and license and *libido*? The disciple of Jesus will not allow his eyes to look upon that which is intended only to minister to vicious tendencies. He will not allow his hands to handle anything morally unclean.

He would prefer to have his friends look upon him as limited in his faculties, in his members, in his experiences, one-eyed, one-handed, one-sided in outlook and action, he would prefer to cut off in himself and from

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himself all that would debase him and cast him into the Gehenna of fire. He would rather be maimed physically than to be mutilated morally. He would rather limp into heaven than to run headlong into hell. The maimed veteran in the spiritual conflict has a crown of life at last. The pampered profligate goes through the world with two eyes and two hands and then he goes on into moral and spiritual death.

3. *Sacrifice.* The language is literal, not figurative. Of course it is the motive that counts. The plucking out of the eye and the cutting off of the hand would not in themselves help in the least to make a lustful man pure. He must have a pure heart and then he can keep both his eyes and both his hands pure; but if he cannot he will believe that no sacrifice is too great to insure freedom from sin. Every cause of sin must be cut off. There must be constant self-discipline and continuous self-sacrifice. Even what is lawful in itself and innocent enough on ordinary occasions must not be allowed to lead us away from the path of purity which is the only way to God. Anything may be sacrificed, and ought to be sacrificed, if it is necessary to the mastery of the lower nature and the supremacy of the better self, even an eye or a hand.

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4. *Divorce.* Jesus added a word at this point on the subject of divorce. He sided with the school of Shammai as over against the school of Hillel, and said that the marriage state was an indissoluble state, except for the cause of fornication. Adultery automatically dissolved the relationship, but nothing else would. A divorced woman could not be married again without adultery. Easy divorce leads to lax morals. Emphasis on the sacredness and the inviolability of the marriage vow would tone up society to a higher level than it has yet known.

Jesus never married. If he had, we cannot conceive him as being unfaithful to his wife or as ever failing in love to her no matter what her own conduct might have been. Like Hosea, he would have loved her in any infidelity and have labored for her restoration to right living. Though repulsed again and again, he would have loved her to the end. He would not have divorced her for anything.

III. SWEARING. The members of the Kingdom were to be better than the most pious among the Pharisees. Their righteousness was to exceed the righteousness of the religious leaders of their day. They were to be reconciled with their adversaries. They were to be pure in thought and in look. They were

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to be pure in their speech, equally free from perjury and from profanity. Jesus continued, *"Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shall perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil,"* 5. 33-37.

Could anything be clearer than the absolute prohibition contained in these words? Yet almost all Christians have justified oath-taking under certain circumstances. Why is this? Because oaths are both allowed and commanded in the Old Testament: but slavery and polygamy and war are just as clearly sanctioned in the Old Testament and it does not follow that these things are justified by the spirit and the teaching of the New Testament. Jesus is explicitly superseding Old Testament laws in these paragraphs of the Sermon on the Mount and he is suggesting newer and higher laws for the regulation of the conduct of the members of the new King-

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dom he had come to found upon the earth.

Paul called God to witness that he spoke the truth upon more than one occasion, and what was proper for Paul, we are told, is proper for any Christian. Paul never had the advantage of personal association with Jesus and he is not our final authority in any matter. If Jesus says, "Swear not at all," and Paul swears upon occasion, we prefer to believe that Paul went astray rather than Jesus.

Twenty-three times in the Old Testament we read, "As I live, saith Jehovah," and in the New Testament we are told that God swore to Abraham that blessing should be his portion, and in the Apocalypse the angel lifts up his right hand to heaven and swears that there shall be delay no longer. We believe that these oath-takings of the angel and of God are anthropomorphisms representing great truths but without any basis in actuality. They are symbols and not realities. They are figures and are not to be interpreted as facts. We refuse to put these figures of speech over against the categorical statement of Jesus and accept them as of higher authority.

Jesus refused to take an oath before Caiaphas when he was asked to do so. He allowed Caiaphas to do the swearing and then an-

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swered, "Thou hast said." He believed that the disciples ought to avoid oaths as both unnecessary and harmful. The church Fathers so understood him: Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Jerome, and Augustine. Achelis, Bruce, Meyer, Weiss, and Wendt agree with them. It seems to us that this is the only legitimate interpretation of the explicit statement of Jesus.

Jesus said that whatsoever went beyond simple affirmation was of the evil one. Satan is the father of lies, and the prevalence of lying is responsible for the felt need of oath-taking, and oath-taking has led to much irreverence and in many minds it has led to a distinction between two kinds or degrees of truth, the truth which needs to be buttressed by an oath and the truth which can be violated without any serious harm, the truth which is good enough for daily conversation and use and the truth which is to be maintained only in the law court after swearing. It is all vicious and it all cometh of evil, as Jesus said.

CHAPTER VI

THE DISCIPLES' EXCEEDING LOVE

JESUS turns next to the Old Testament law of retaliation and suggests that the exceeding righteousness of the members of the new kingdom, the righteousness exceeding that of the scribes and the Pharisees, would not only repudiate the ancient law of an eye for an eye, but would substitute for it what might seem to many a reckless disregard of self-interest in nonresistance to evil and the persistent display of good will. "*Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil,*" 5. 38, 39.

1. *A Difficult Passage.* How much trouble these sentences have given to the militarists of the ages! They are seemingly so antagonistic to all of their principles! It takes a deal of dexterity in exegesis to prove that the man who said these things would handle a machine gun with good conscience in any war. Yet many of our preachers and our churches seemed to come to that conclusion. They gave the blessing of Jesus to the great conflict; and

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in that conflict it was army for army, gun for gun, submarine for submarine, poison gas for poison gas, a tooth for a tooth, fist for fist, slap for slap, life for life, outrage for outrage, devastation for devastation from beginning to end of the whole mad business, and back of the fighting lines on both sides most of the churches stood applauding and crying, "We are engaged in this business in the name of the Lord!"

Some simply forgot the Sermon on the Mount. They put it out of their thought for the time being. They laid it on the shelf until the war was over. They ignored it in all their practice and preaching. Others tried to torture and twist its plain statements into some sort of a sanction for their proposed devilishness, and they talked about startling hyperboles and extreme utterances until they almost or quite convinced themselves that Jesus did not mean what he said or say what he meant, but the very contrary thing!

2. *Heathen Ethics.* Their code of ethics was that of the heathen, not the ethics of Jesus. Aristotle said, "To be revenged of one's enemy is more honorable than to be reconciled." That suited the militarists exactly. That stated their policy perfectly. They did not need to torture or twist that plain state-

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ment. They were ready to accept it just as it stood. What a pity that Aristotle had said that and not Jesus! Seneca said, "To pardon a transgressor who ought to be punished is a degree of clemency which no wise man would be guilty of." All the militarists inside and outside the churches were willing to say "Amen!" to that. There was no thought of pardoning anybody after the war was on. Every transgressor had to be punished until the last farthing of possible penalty had been exacted by force of arms and process of law. It would be foolish to be clement in any degree. No wise man would hesitate to take all he could get in reparation and retaliation in ruthless revenge. It is the wisdom of the world; but it is not the wisdom of Jesus here in the Sermon on the Mount.

Cicero said, "It is the first office of justice to hurt no man unless first provoked by an injury," and the clear inference was that after an injury was inflicted the only thing a just man could be expected to do was to hurt back just as quick and as hard as he could. Cicero declared that he would put that principle into practice in his personal conduct when he wrote to his friend Atticus, "I will avenge myself for all the evil deeds which have been done to me according to the provo-

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cation which I have received." That is common sense to the militarist. That is the platform upon which every war is conducted. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, compensatory vengeance for every provocation—that was the law in the Old Testament, that was the morality of the heathen; and if Jesus only had approved of it, we could all go to war with good heart. It is the policy upon which war proceeds.

3. *Impracticable.* Jesus took direct issue with that policy. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, . . . but I say unto you" something different. It is very hard to make it appear that he did not say something different. Most of the exegetes give up the task in despair. They acknowledge that Jesus set up a different standard here but they say that it is an impracticable standard. They agree with a former Archbishop of York that these three chapters of the Sermon on the Mount present an impracticable ideal. "It may be well for us to keep these ideals in mind and to approximate them as nearly as possible in our conduct, but to accept such extreme statements as precepts for everyday life is utterly out of the question. They are pitched too high for practical purposes. They are quite unsuited to the wear and tear of ordinary

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existence. We can talk about them and admire them and ingeniously explain them away. No one would think of obeying them and trying to antedate the millennium in such times as these. Such precepts may be useful when everybody—or, at least, nearly everybody—is good, but not now.”¹

4. *Not for Present.* It is a favorite argument of the Roman Catholics that these precepts are to be applied only in a perfect society, and many Protestant commentators have agreed with them. They say, “In the world, even the so-called Christian world, as it is constituted to-day, literal obedience to these precepts is impracticable. It may be possible to practice them in a family, and perhaps in a school, and more doubtfully in a village community, but when you come to cities and nations and any larger groups of men, with human nature as it at present is, these principles cannot be applied. They evidently were intended only for a perfect society in a great brotherhood of men united in community interest and life.” These statements have no standing in the face of the facts. Jesus has been speaking in this Sermon about certain people who are blessed and at the same

¹ Frank Ballard, *A Practical Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount*, vol. i, p. 331.

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time persecuted. He has told them to be as salt in an unsalted mass, and as lights in a darkened world. He will warn them later about dogs and swine and false prophets in their own vicinity. They were to give alms and to fast, not in the future, but in their own day. If Jesus had had a perfect society in mind, how could he have talked about enemies and instanced such injustices and indignities as the smiting upon the cheek and the taking away of the cloak and the compulsion to go a mile? Evidently these things were liable to happen in the society of his day, in which his disciples were called upon to live, and they would be proofs of a very imperfect state of society whenever and wherever they might occur.

The very content of these precepts proves that if they are to be applied at all, they must be applied in a far from perfect state of society. Rufus M. Jones is perfectly right in his suggestion that obedience to these precepts "involves putting into practice the laws of the kingdom of God before that kingdom has really come"; and he says that those who did it realized only too clearly that the kingdom of God had not come, but they believed that it never would come until somebody believed in its principles enough to try them out

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in actual operation; and they resolved to go forward then, and make the experimental trial, and take the consequences.²

Nevertheless, the most of the members of the Christian Church refuse to attempt the practice of these precepts at the present time; and they say: "To try to follow them now would be to give up our rights and our pleasures to the caprice of unjust and unscrupulous spoliation. It would be to make all good people the prey of all wicked people. It would be to be poor in spirit when others would be sure to take advantage of it. It would be to be meek when the arrogant would trample over our most precious possessions. It would be to be merciful when no mercy could be expected from our exploiters. It would be to be pure in heart when our enemies were purely fiendish in their delight at our simplicity. It would be to be hungering after righteousness when the Huns were hungering after our blood. It would be to be peacemakers when all the world had gone to war and the pacifists were despised and ridiculed and persecuted with imprisonment and death. The world we live in cannot be run on such principles. It would go to smash in short order if we should try to observe them. These

² Jones, *The Remnant*, pp. 141, 142.

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statements made by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount are startling hyperboles, not to be taken with any considerable seriousness. His speech always was highly metaphorical, and his metaphors are not to be pressed."

It is such a convenient thing to do with troublesome passages, just label them metaphors and hyperboles and then lay them to rest wrapped in lavender in the bureau drawer. The trouble with these statements of Jesus in the Great Sermon is that they are not on the face of them very figurative. They seem, on the contrary, to be perfectly plain and matter-of-fact directions for conduct. One never would think of taking them other than literally if they did not run so counter to our present and ordinary manner of living.

5. *Not Precepts?* Suppose we say, therefore, that they are not precepts, but principles. Some people seem to find a great deal of comfort in this distinction. A modern commentator declares that the four precepts in this paragraph are startling and then says that it is impossible for either governments or individuals to keep them, for a state which endeavored to shape its policy in exact accordance with them would soon cease to exist; and if individuals acted in strict obedience to them, society would be reduced to anarchy;

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and violence, robbery, and shameless exaction would be supreme. The inference is then drawn that they are not precepts, but illustrations of principles. To be sure, they are in the form of rules; but as they cannot be kept as rules, we are compelled to look beyond the letter to the spirit which they embody.³

A precept is a rule of action. It tells us definitely what to do in some particular case. If we find ourselves indisposed to do it, then let us decide it is not a precept but a principle and let us insist that "the distinction between the two is most important."⁴ How is it important? Does the principle abrogate the precept? Does the precept say, "You must do so and so," but the principle say, "You must not do so and so"? If they say the same thing, where is there any important distinction? A principle may be more comprehensive than any single precept or than four such precepts as we have here, but if it stands for the same thing, how does it relieve us in any measure from obedience to the precepts which simply illustrate it?

Until we can be shown that the principle is opposed to the precepts and is somewhat or

³ Plummer, *International Critical Commentary on Luke*, p. 185.

⁴ Thayer, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1900, p. 149.

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altogether different from them, we cannot see any important distinction between them except as to their scope. The precepts simply give single applications of the principle in practice. Principle and precept are not opposed to each other. They are indissolubly one and inseparable. If the precepts are impossible, then the principle is also. If they cannot be kept as rules, why look beyond them for a spirit which it would be equally impossible to keep? If the principle issues in such precepts, how can precepts diametrically opposite issue from the same principle?

It is pure assumption to say that a state which observed them would cease to exist or that a society which practiced them would be reduced to anarchy. Jesus did not think so, or he never would have given these commands. He never would have said anything which would cause violence, robbery, and shameless exaction to become supreme. On the contrary, we believe that his teaching will make the state secure and anarchy obsolete and will cause violence, robbery, and shameless exaction to cease. It would bring some things to an end.

6. *End of the World.* The world of our present experience *would* come to an end if these precepts were practiced, but the question

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is whether it would end in disaster, a disaster in any wise comparable to that of the Great War, for example, or, rather, in a new and much improved condition of society. A world at war would come to an abrupt end; but a world of reconciliation and brotherly love might take its place. In England some pacifists were on trial at the Mansion House, and the Public Prosecutor in a moment of inspired indignation said, "If all the world thought as you do, war would be impossible!" and the utter horror of his tone showed what an inconceivable calamity he thought a warless world would be.

The precepts of Jesus put into practice would bring the wars of the world to an end. A world devoted to the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye and the pride of life would come to an end; but a world of real refinement in spiritual pursuits might take its place. A world of greed and competition in which the weaker went to the wall and monopolies thrived on the exploitation of the masses would come to an end; but a world of co-operation in which each labored for all and all for each might take its place. A world of imperialism and autocracies would cease and the democracy of the disciples of Jesus might take its place. The self-seeking world

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would disappear forever and the meek might inherit the earth.

7. *Mitigation.* Jesus does transcend the ethics of the world in which he lived, both the Jewish and the Roman world. Both the Jews and the Romans believed in the law of retaliation and in dominion by force of arms. The Old Testament law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth was no ruthless license to brutality. On the contrary, it was intended to mitigate the horrors of primitive warfare. The savage is not content with equal recompense in injury. He prefers to avenge himself twofold, twentyfold, an hundredfold. The law was enacted to curb this impulse to run wild in the excesses of a vendetta. It was a legal check upon unrestrained passions. It was a distinct advance in the morality of warfare, if such a phrase can be used of a thing inherently immoral. Jesus now transcends the so-called war-morality of the past and the present with the abolition of the immoral thing.

8. *Abolition.* He declares that his disciples, with a righteousness exceeding that of their ancestors and their contemporaries, will not engage in war at all. They will not resist the one who does them evil in physical violence, legal oppression, or military im-

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pressment. They will not indulge in physical violence themselves. They will submit to be defrauded rather than to have recourse to courts of law. They will not resist any military coercion, but on the contrary will show themselves willing to assist the state in any legitimate endeavor. They will be neither brawlers, litigants, nor traitors. They will be nonresisters in private quarrels and public lawsuits and government oppressions.

Jesus had said that his disciples would be persecuted and oppressed. Now he tells them not to retaliate in kind when they suffer under these persecutions and oppressions. He will go on to say that they must overcome evil with good, that they must love their enemies and do good to all until they have won the world for the kingdom of God. That is his program of conquest, through meekness and purity and love, through reason and rebuke and patient endurance of wrong until the wrongdoer is convicted of sin and converted to righteousness by the persistent preaching of the godly lives of the children of the good Father in heaven.

He would have his disciples tolerate any wrong to themselves or to others rather than wrong their own consciences by joining in any brutal and insensate slaughter of their

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fellow men in war. He would not have them become wholesale murderers with machine guns and poison gas, under any circumstances. He would have them refuse to resist him that is evil with force and violence of any kind, but only with the protest of tongue and pen and a righteous and peaceful life.

9. *Foolish?* What a fool program that program of his was, according to the wise men of to-day! Yet the foolishness of God has proved itself to be wiser than the wisdom of men more than once in the history of this world. God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are.⁵ The wisdom of the wise has had its way in the first decades of this century and it has brought all Europe to the brink of bankruptcy and all civilization to the verge of collapse.

All authorities agree that another war like the last Great War will finish the job and leave the world in utter ruin and wreck. Is it not high time to ask ourselves if the way of Jesus as set forth here in the Sermon on

⁵ 1 Cor. 1. 27, 28.

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the Mount is not a better way than that which has proved so continuously disastrous to the welfare of the race? Is it not high time to ask if there is not a better way than striking back and retaliation and obstinacy? Is it not time to give a trial at least to the way of sweet reasonableness and long-suffering patience and never-failing love? Jesus believed that that was a better way, and whenever we become the disciples of Jesus we must adopt his way of ending war and making the world safe for democracy and bringing in the kingdom of God upon earth. Until we do that we are simply calling ourselves Christians while we are refusing to permit our conduct to be determined by the program and the principles of Christ.

The early Christians took Jesus at his word; and what was the result? Justin Martyr gives his testimony to this effect: "We must not resist; nor has God wished us to be imitators of the wicked, but has bidden us by patience and gentleness to lead all men from the shame and lust of evil things. And this we are able to show in the case of many. They changed from being violent and tyrannical, conquered either through having followed the constancy of their neighbor's lives, or through having noticed the strange patience

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of fellow-travelers when they were overreached, or through having experienced it in the case of those with whom they had dealings.”⁶

If all professing Christians had followed the same course, might not the world have been led from the shame and lust of evil things long before the present century? It was one of the precepts of Buddha, “With mercy and forbearance shalt thou disarm every foe. For want of fuel the fire expires: mercy and forbearance bring violence to naught.” This other Oriental religious leader, Jesus of Nazareth, agrees with the saint of India. He said, “Resist not him who doeth evil; by patience and gentleness lead men from evil things.”

Shall we interpret these sayings of Jesus in such a way as to rob them of all their meaning and to make them say just the opposite of what they seem to say, or shall we take them at their face value and believe that they say just what they seem to say and mean just what they seem to mean? It was a judicious observation of Richard Hooker, “Where a literal construction will stand, the furthest from the letter is commonly the worst.” Suppose, therefore, that we keep as near to the

⁶ Justin, *Apol.* XVI, 1-4.

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literal interpretation as may seem possible, in the hope that such an understanding of the text will be the best.

10. *Nonresistance to Evil Men.* In the first place, Jesus laid down the general principle of nonresistance to evil men. "I say unto you, That ye resist not one who doeth thee evil." We feel sure that the word "evil" here is masculine and refers to a person, because Jesus immediately offers three illustrations of his general principle and in each of the three the evil suffered is an evil inflicted by a person: "whosoever" and "if any man" and "whosoever" again, all referring to an individual or to individuals as representing themselves or the social and legal and national institutions and regulations of their day. To him "evil" meant "him that is evil"; "resist not" meant "resist not with violence or anything else that is evil"; and "resist not evil" meant, "resist not the evil of him who is evil by like evil of your own."

Evil as such is to be condemned root and branch. It is to be assaulted with tongue and pen. It is to be overcome and driven out of the world by the preaching and practice of the good; but not otherwise. When the evil becomes incarnated in a man and expresses itself in personal violence or legal injustice

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or interference with personal liberty in conscription for military service, it is not to be resisted by retaliatory personal violence or legal procedure or stubborn refusal; but it is to be met with meekness, kindness, patient suffering, and generous acceptance of hard and unjust conditions, in the spirit of the beatitudes and after the example of Jesus.

CHAPTER VII

THE NON-RESISTANCE OF JESUS

DID Jesus ever preach resistance to the Roman power? There were patriots in Palestine who were clamoring for revolt and revolution during all these years of his ministry. Did Jesus ever ally himself with them in word or deed? He either lacked the courage of Judas Maccabeus or Judas of Galilee and King Albert of the Belgians and Theodore Roosevelt of the Big Stick, or he was a wiser man than they and chose a better course. He believed that war would be contrary to the will of God.

He refused to be a king¹ because he knew that gaining a kingship in Galilee would involve the use of military force. Herod Antipas imprisoned John the Baptist and then beheaded him. He was a fox,² full of evil deeds. Did it ever occur to Jesus to head a successful revolution against him and punish him with the punishment he deserved? That would have been a righteous thing to do, and

¹ John 6. 15.

² Luke 13. 32.

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Jesus came to preach a revival of righteousness among the people.

He had come to preach and not to punish. He would not attempt to attain righteousness by unrighteous means. He would not compel anybody to be good by the infliction of physical injuries. Pilate mingled the blood of certain Galilæans with their sacrifices.³ When they told Jesus about it all the patriotic blood in him must have boiled with indignation. Did he suggest revenge or retaliation?

Did Jesus ever resist men who were doing himself an injury? The Samaritans were inhospitable, and James and John would have called down fire from heaven upon their heads in retaliation; but Jesus rebuked them and reminded them that he had not come to destroy men's lives but to save them and that that spirit of retaliation might be the spirit of Elijah and of the Old Testament, but it was not the spirit of the new kingdom he had come to proclaim. Then he went quietly on to another village.⁴ When they thought to hurl him over the precipice he never thought of hurling any of them over, to see how they liked it; he went quietly away and let their angry passions cool down in his absence.⁵

³ Luke 13. 1.

⁴ Luke 9. 51-56.

⁵ Luke 4. 28-30.

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When they took up stones to stone him he never stooped to take up a single stone in return. If he could not break their hearts with his words, he would not break their heads with the throwing of stones. He hid himself for the moment, and then went his way.⁶ When they came to arrest him in the garden, Peter would have resisted such evil men; he would have defended the Innocent One; but Jesus told him to put up his sword, for they that took the sword in either aggressive or defensive warfare would perish by the sword.⁷ When they unjustly accused him before the court and twisted his words and made it appear that he had said things which he never had said and never had intended to say, he answered them nothing.⁸

When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.⁹ When Pilate asked him if he were a king, he answered that he was a king in the kingdom of truth, and that, if his kingdom had been a kingdom of this world, his disciples would have fought, as all the citizens of the world-kingsdoms did and always had done up

⁶ John 8. 59.

⁷ Matt. 26. 51-52.

⁸ Matt. 26. 59-63.

⁹ 1 Pet. 2. 23.

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to that time; but he had come to inaugurate a new order of things in which his disciples would suffer persecution and martyrdom rather than fight with their fellow men and maim and kill and commit the countless outrages connected with military coercion in order to get a world of universal peace and brotherhood.¹⁰

He could have commanded twelve legions of angels to do that work for him if he had so chosen; but he was not such a fool as to think that a war could end war and make all men happy and good. He would draw all men unto himself by self-sacrificing love. He would not compel or coerce a single soul to come to him to find blessedness and peace. They buffeted him and spat upon him. They burdened him with a heavy cross until he sank under its weight. They nailed his hands to the cursed tree, and they pierced his side with a spear.

He was given over to the malice of the soldiers in their brutal play, and then he was given over to the minions of the law to suffer their most horrible form of execution. He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearers, so opened he not his mouth. Unresisting with physical force of any kind he seemed helpless in the

¹⁰ John 18. 33-36.

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hands of his foes, and his life was taken from the earth. The Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip, "I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this?" Then Philip "began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus."¹¹

"O Captain of the wars, whence won Ye so
great scars?

In what fight did Ye smite, and what
manner was the foe?

Was it on a day of rout they compassed Thee
about,

Or gat Ye these adornings when Ye
wrought their overthrow?

"'Twas on a day of rout they girded Me
about,

They wounded all My brow, and they
smote Me through the side:

My hand held no sword when I met their
armèd horde,

And the conqueror fell down, and the
conquered bruised his pride.'

"What is this, unheard before, that the un-
armed make war,

And the slain hath the gain, and the
victor hath the rout?

What wars, then, are these, and what the
enemies,

Strange Chief, with the scars of Thy con-
quest trenched about?"

¹¹ Acts 8. 32-35.

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A strange chief, this Chief of the Christian Church! The world never has seen his like, the unresisting sufferer at the hands of evil men, the unresisting victim of an illegal execution, the unresisting sacrifice to military oppression, giving everything, forgiving everyone, conquering the hearts of men by his unresisting and persisting love, drawing all men unto him in the end by love alone.

“‘What is *Thy* Name? Oh, show!’ ‘My Name ye may not know;

.

But my titles that are high, are they not upon My thigh?

“King of Kings!” are the words, “Lord of Lords!”

It is written “King of Kings, Lord of Lords.” ’ ’¹²

Sometime every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus represents supreme wisdom in his teaching and supreme wisdom in the example of his life. The attitude of Jesus toward evil-doing demands the utmost strength and courage. Aptly the religion of Jesus has been called a revolutionary faith with the Hymn of Love for its Marseillaise and the Cross for its oriflamme.

When men have grown weary of their long

¹² Francis Thompson, “The Veteran of Heaven.”

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centuries of labor in Sisyphus-like rolling of the rock of military domination toward the summit of the hill of world-power and of finding it rolling down upon them again with ever more crushing weight, and they are heavily-laden beyond endurance with taxes and with the steady drain upon their man-power necessary to support their military establishments both in time of war and of peace, they will come to the Prince of Peace and find rest. His yoke is easy, and his burden is comparatively light. When we look at the life of Jesus and make it a commentary upon what he said here in the Sermon, can we doubt that he intended it to be taken literally? He practiced what he preached, and he both preached and practiced non-resistance by personal violence to evil men through all his life.

Therefore when a theological professor in discussing this passage in the Sermon on the Mount gravely tells us, "In John 18. 22, 23, it can be seen that Jesus did not have in mind literal non-resistance, since he did not himself practice it," we turn to the passage with great interest to see if there was any exception in the life of Jesus to non-resistance by violent methods when he was assaulted by violent men; and to our surprise and relief we read, "And when he had thus spoken, one

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of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?"

Did Jesus slap back? Did he return blow for blow? Did he strike the officer either with the palm of his hand or with his fist? Did he resist violence with violence? He did not. He rebuked the man with all dignity: but he never lifted his hand to strike back. He was absolutely faithful to his own precepts; and when the commentator tells us that in this instance Jesus did not practice literal non-resistance he absolutely misrepresents the facts.

Therefore we are ready to discount his further observations in this matter, when he says, "That certain individuals (most recently Tolstoy) and sects (Anabaptists, Menonites, Quakers) have taken these sayings literally, as statutes to be obeyed, is not to the credit either of their knowledge of the teaching of Jesus or of their own common sense. Such literalism is the perversion of Jesus' method and intent, and is one of the worst enemies of the gospel, for it holds up the teaching of Jesus to the ridicule of all sane-thinking men."¹³

¹³ Hastings' *Bible Dictionary*, vol. v, p. 29a.

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The teaching of Jesus is utter foolishness in the eyes of the militarists and the worldlings; but it is a question whether they represent "all sane-thinking men." There are some who think that Jesus is wiser than all of them, and that Christians would do well to be wise with his wisdom rather than to misrepresent his conduct and teaching and follow after those who believe and practice resistance and retaliation for all personal and national wrongs. Their wisdom has brought world war and world ruin. The literal observance of these precepts of Jesus would go far to bring world reconstruction and world salvation.

Would it not be worthwhile for all professing Christians to cease ridiculing them as contrary to "common sense" and make an honest effort to practice them even as Jesus did? They might be more nearly Christians if they did. Dean Inge of Saint Paul's has said, "The Quakers as a body seem to me to come nearest to what genuinely Christian society would be."¹⁴ They seem to the Dean to be more loyal to the spirit and the letter of the revelation in Christ than the rest of Christendom and the civilized world, in which "its implications in the matter of conduct, in-

¹⁴ *The Legacy of Greece*, p. 42.

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dividual, social, and international, are still imperfectly understood and have never been acted upon, except feebly and sporadically." We challenge the Christian world to act upon them, even as Jesus challenged his hearers in the Sermon on the Mount. Where these precepts have been tried they have approved themselves in all history. When they shall be tried, not feebly and sporadically, but continuously and universally, we believe that they will usher in the kingdom of heaven on earth.

One of the most promising of the younger preachers in the Methodist Episcopal Church said in a sermon recently, "If I were to be born again, I would choose to be born a Quaker." The reason for that choice was to be found in his utter disgust and disillusionment after the Great War.

In September, 1914, the Quakers held a conference at Llandudno, in which the question was asked, "Has Christ nothing but implicit condemnation for men who offer their own lives in order to stop a tyrant's cruelty to others?" and this answer was made: "All self-sacrifice for a worthy end is good and noble and Christlike, and we cannot believe that Christ would ever condemn it *as such*, or that it is his will that in the presence of

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tyranny and cruelty we should stand aside and do nothing. But the answer of those who have lived nearest to him in spirit, like many of the first Christians and of the early Quakers, would seem to be that his followers must have patience even with tyranny and cruelty, and seek to wear it out by long-suffering.

“In James Nayler’s words, they ‘take their kingdom with entreaty and not with contention, and keep it by lowliness of mind.’ The early Quakers, though they never used force, were vigorous in their protests against injustice to themselves and others. The recognition gradually won by the Christians and the Quakers, without any use of violence, seems to show that such patience is not in vain, if it is not mere indolence or cowardice, but is inspired by the faith that there is in all human hearts, even in the most apparently cruel, something that can be won at length by long-suffering love.”¹⁵

This would seem to be the spirit of Jesus as expressed in the Great Sermon. It was the spirit of Buddha, who said, “The man who foolishly does me wrong, I will return to him the protection of my ungrudging love; the more evil comes from him, the more good

¹⁵ E. G., in *Friends and the War*, p. 143.

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shall go from me. . . . Let a man overcome anger by love, let a man overcome evil by good, let him overcome the greedy by liberality and the liar by truth."

This is more than mere non-resistance. "To turn the other cheek for a second blow is more than not to resist the first. To give voluntarily one's cloak in addition is more than to submit passively to being despoiled of one's coat. What is intended is a rebuke, a retribution—the rebuke of self-forgetful love, which is willing to bear itself the retribution in the effort to reform the offender. The suffering is not cowardly or servile; it is vicarious. The motive is not personal fear; it is redemptive love. The injunction is to overcome evil with good. It is positive, not negative."¹⁶

Retaliation never stops the desire for evil. It usually increases it. The revenge we take always is resented and aggravates the will to do evil in the mind of the evildoer. Any force we may apply to him and any injury we may inflict upon him he is reasonably sure to regard as an evil and as a sufficient warrant for further evildoing. Evil multiplies along that line of procedure. Jesus maintained that evil could not be overcome by evil, but only by good. In not resisting the evil man with

¹⁶ Dickey, *The Constructive Revolution of Jesus*, p. 56.

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physical violence the hope and the endeavor would be to appeal to him on the moral and spiritual plane, to prevent him in the best and quickest way from repeating his evil deed and to bring him to give up his desire to injure anyone in any way.

Non-resistance always would lessen the gross amount of evil in the world and often would lead to the conversion of the evildoer himself. That would be its aim in any event. It aims at the spirit of the evildoer rather than his body. It would change his mind and will as well as his acts. One converted man is worth more to the world than two men with battered cheeks and hating hearts. Resistance with violence may stop evil on the physical plane sometimes, but it inevitably increases it on the psychological and spiritual plane.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ILLUSTRATIVE PRECEPTS OF JESUS

1. *Physical Indignity.* The first illustration Jesus used was this illustration of physical indignity. "*Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also,*" 5. 39. Can that be intended to be taken literally? Billy Bray thought so. He had been a champion pugilist before he was converted. Some of his former companions were very angry when he deserted them to join the church. One day as he was going down into the pit one of them struck him a hard blow upon his cheek, and said, "Take that, for turning Methodist."

Billy Bray did not strike back. He said, "The Lord forgive thee, lad, as I do, and bring thee to a better mind; I'll pray for thee."

A few days later the fellow came to him under deepest conviction and begged Billy Bray to assure him of his forgiveness again, in order that it might help him to find peace with God and man.

Of course that might have turned out other-

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wise, but it did turn out in just that way in that particular case. If the prescription worked like that with Billy Bray, why may it not be true that it would work like that in countless other cases if Christians only would put it to the trial as Billy Bray did? Who knows but that if all Christians did it, the whole world would be under conviction in a few weeks or a few years and on the way to conversion in a few centuries? It might be worth trying, especially in view of the fact that the contrary method has proved to be such a colossal failure in all the past.

What happens when a man who is struck strikes back? Generally, it means a fight to the finish; and when a fight is finished there are two men much damaged physically and nearly wrecked spiritually, filled with hate and mad as March hares, and threatening further damage in the future. Is this better than one bruise on one cheek and the possibility of repentance on the part of the offender and reconciliation for all time to come? Is twice the material damage and indefinitely greater spiritual injury for any reason to be preferred? What does common sense say to that question? Can there be any doubt concerning the answer?

Does it say what Theodore Roosevelt said

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in Stationer's Hall in London, June 6, 1910, "We despise a man who submits to insult," or does it agree with Jesus, who, when insulted by the buffeting of the brutal Roman soldiers, did not strike back, but submitted patiently even as he had asked his disciples to do? The militarist may despise Jesus, but the saints of all history have highly honored him. His practical wisdom will approve itself to all in the end.

A man is insulted only when his spirit feels and acknowledges the insult. If his spirit refuses to be enraged and persists in ignoring the intended insult and in continuing the attitude of friendliness and good will, the rudeness soon ceases. It thrives only upon resentment and opposition. It dies away if it is not noticed. Theodore Roosevelt to the contrary notwithstanding, we shall believe that the man who triumphs over insult in continuous good will is a wiser man than the blustering bully who resents it and perpetuates it in retaliatory resistance.

2. *Legal Injustice.* The second illustration Jesus used was that of a process of law by which a man would take the undergarment. In such a case was the citizen of the Kingdom to resist, and stand up for his rights and employ a lawyer to defend them and run up a

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bill many times more than the price of the garment and perpetuate bad feelings in two families for all time to come? No; Jesus said that it would be both cheaper and better in the long run to give the litigant his outer garment as well as his inner garment and at the same time to give him proof that a man could be deprived of personal property and still be sweet about it, preferring to lose his coat rather than his religion and to part with his cloak rather than with his brother's friendship and good will. It would be far preferable to do without both coat and cloak if in that way one could get along without both a quarrel and litigation. Probably less expensive, it surely would be more brotherly.

"And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also," 5.40. Can that command be taken literally? Jesus seemed to take it so. When he hung upon the cross both his coat and cloak had been taken away from him, and he saw the soldiers gambling for their possession, and he did not call upon his disciples to resist them. He prayed that they might be forgiven. Paul seemed to take this command literally. He wrote to the Corinthians: "There is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye

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not rather take wrong? why . . . not rather . . . be defrauded?"¹

Going to law would be no security against being defrauded. The courts themselves have been used for purposes of fraud. They often have done wrong as well as right. What if all Christians kept clear of them, and suffered in person and property in consequence? If it were clear that their purpose was to avoid misunderstanding and misrepresentation and any or all ill will which legal strife is likely to engender, would not the evils of court procedure soon be abolished in the growing atmosphere of brotherly kindness and consideration? Would not a literal following of this precept be worth trying, especially in view of the fact that the lawsuits of the ages have failed to establish and maintain universal righteousness and justice among men?

If the church showed by its conduct that it preferred the Golden Rule to the rule of gold, and that it valued the salvation of men more than securities and silver, and that it put the interests of the Kingdom above all else, would it not soon command the respect of all its despoilers and the devotion of all its members, and would not all other things be added to it? It would be worth trying. When the

¹ 1 Cor. 6. 7.

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good bishop gave Jean Valjean the silver the convict had stolen and added the candlesticks to the spoons and the forks he did a most foolish thing as judged by the world. He lost his silver which he prized very highly, but he saved a soul which to him was of infinite worth. He esteemed it a good bargain.

What if all Christians were like him? What if all Christians acted as if property were relatively unimportant as compared with the good will and the salvation of men? What if, like the good Monseigneur Bienvenu, all Christians literally obeyed the Master's command and avoided litigation and bad feeling by the voluntary sacrifice of property, would the world be a worse world or a better one? Some day the church may try to exemplify its creed in its conduct and then we will know whether the Master was foolish or wise in these precepts. In the meantime we are free to believe in his supreme wisdom, the more especially as disobedience to his precepts on the part of the church has not made it supremely successful thus far in its history.

The law courts are not above reproach in these days. Sometimes they are no guarantee of justice. It is commonly said that it is next to impossible to convict great wealth. A million dollars is almost assured of immunity.

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A poor man has little or no chance against a rich man, for a rich man can appeal his case from court to court and hire the most able lawyers to defend him behind endless legal technicalities, while the poor man cannot stand the expense and may well prefer injustice to utter bankruptcy.

It is a fact that many men have gone into the law courts for the establishment of their just rights and have come out of them without their rights and without anything else of any value, having paid the last cent in litigation, and nursing a futile sense of outrage for the remainder of their life. There was an old catechism which had the question, "What are the laws for?" and the answer given was, "Laws are to preserve the rich in the possession of their riches and to restrain the vices of the poor." That catechism is no longer in use, but that question and answer might find many a present-day application.

It is a notorious fact that the whole legal system of our day is enswathed in red tape and is the mummied remains of an age when property had rights over the claims of humanity and money was protected at the expense of men. The Dred Scott decision, intended to protect and maintain the institution of slavery, and recent Supreme Court decisions

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against the income tax and against the federal Child Labor Law were perfectly legal and absolutely wrong. The trouble is not with the court, but with the law itself. The law needs to be modified as soon as it proves itself inimical to human interests. There is nothing sacrosanct in law itself. Laws are made for men and not men for laws.

The only immutable laws are the moral laws, the laws of God and not the laws of men. Legal technicalities must give way to human rights. The highest authority is not that of man-made laws, but that of eternal rights. Blackstone in his *Commentaries* appeals from all lower laws to the highest law, which he calls the law of nature, and he says, "This law of nature, being coeval with mankind and dictated by God himself, is, of course, superior in obligation to any other. It is binding all over the globe in all countries, and at all times: no human laws are of any validity if contrary to this; and such of them as are valid derive all their force and all their authority, mediately or immediately, from this original."²

It is generally conceded that theology led among the professions in the modern movement to free itself and its institutions from

² Blackstone, *Commentaries*, Introduction, Section 2.

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slavery to the letter and was the first to enter into the larger freedom of the spirit characteristic of our times. The medical profession followed after and declared its independence of ancient formulæ and methods; but the legal profession still feels the dead hand of the past lying heavy upon it, and only a few of the more venturesome spirits in its ranks are ready to assent that legal procedure needs to be modified radically to meet the demands of our changing times; and in the meantime most people feel safer out of the courts than in them, and all people ought to see that the judgment of Jesus at this point represents the highest wisdom as well as truest religion. Justice is conventionally represented as blindfold and with a sword in her hand. It is time for her eyes to be opened to see present conditions and present needs, and the sword of violence ought to be replaced by the palm of peace.

Paul said, "Why not rather be defrauded than go into court?" At the close of Plato's *Gorgias* the wisest man among the Greeks, Socrates, is represented as saying, "These doctrines of yours have now been examined and found wanting. And this doctrine alone has stood the test—that we ought to be more afraid of wronging than of being wronged,

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and that the prime business of every man is, not to seem good, but to be good, in all his private and public dealings." It is in that spirit that Jesus said, "If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. It will be better to be wronged than to maintain your rights at the expense of good will. It will be better to lose your property than to lose the possibility of friendly relations with your brother."

3. *Military Compulsion.* The third illustration given by Jesus was that of military or civil compulsion. The verb he uses is the technical verb for commandeering for public service. When Jesus fainted under the burden of the cross the soldiers commandeered Simon the Cyrenian to carry the cross to Calvary. It was service which could not have been avoided, but Simon might have done it very unwillingly and very sulkily. Jesus suggests that it ought to have been done by any citizen of the heavenly kingdom with a degree of cheerful compliance.

"And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain," 5. 41. If you are impressed by the police or the soldiers to carry or to haul their baggage or to carry their mail the distance of a mile, do it gladly as regarding it a privilege to be of service to the state

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and prove your willingness by offering to go another mile without constraint. It may be inconvenient. It may be a galling imposition. Nevertheless, make the best of it. It has to be done; so do it in a kindly and helpful spirit, as citizens willing to take your share in the burdens and the disabilities of citizenship, as subjects submissive to the powers that be in control. Do not take the attitude of recalcitrants or of revolutionists. The interests of the Kingdom must not be subordinated to those of any political revolution.

That was the position taken by Jesus in the world of his day. When Peter asked him about paying the Temple tax he, first of all, made it perfectly clear that he was under no moral obligation to do it; and then he commanded Peter to pay it! When they asked him about the tribute money he told them to render to Cæsar that which was Cæsar's and to God the things which belonged to God. His attitude was that of submission to constituted authority, both ecclesiastical and political, as far as that was possible without disobedience to the higher allegiance to the Father in heaven. It is the attitude of the entire New Testament.

Peter and Paul preach the same doctrine. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man

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for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. . . . Fear God. Honor the king.”³ “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Who-soever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. . . . Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.”⁴

Just before making these statements Paul had written, “If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good,”⁵ and immediately after these words he had added, “Owe no man anything,

³ 1 Pet. 2. 13, 14, 17.

⁴ Rom. 13. 1-2, 5-7.

⁵ Rom. 12. 20, 21.

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but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”⁶

These apostles had caught the spirit of the Master. They understood these statements of the Sermon on the Mount. All their teaching on this subject is set in a framework of love. Love is the underlying principle of it all. The life of the disciple of Jesus is to be a life of love, and anything that is contrary to love is to become impossible to him. He is to be un-revengeful, unselfish, unconstrained in his outflow of good will to all men. He is to love God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself.

It is the only way out of the situation caused by the present un-Christian world-order. Irrepressible good will will disarm it, heal it, save it, make it a new world-order sooner and better than anything else will. You may commandeer, but you cannot domineer

⁶ Rom. 13. 8-10.

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over good will. It can persist and so resist all compulsion and prove its existence by continuous kindly words and deeds. It will be believed in at last and then it will have speedy victory. We cannot expect anybody to believe in it as long as its methods cannot be distinguished from those of ill will and hate. These methods of Jesus will prove its reality and will save the world.

CHAPTER IX

THE SUMMARIZING PRECEPTS

1. *Giving.* Jesus added another general statement as a sort of summary of all which had gone before. "*Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away,*" 5.42. Can that command be taken literally? In the year 1900, at the Ecumenical Conference in New York City, a missionary gave this experience: He said that the natives among whom he worked were natural thieves. They laid hands on anything they could find about his house and he was in despair about teaching them the first elements of honesty. He was translating the Sermon on the Mount into their language, and when he came to this verse he was in great perplexity over it. He was sure that if he translated it, they would ask him at once why he did not practice what he taught. He spent a whole night in prayer and at last decided to go ahead with the translation and trust God for the consequences.

It turned out just as he had expected. The natives heard this new gospel gladly and im-

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mediately asked him for everything portable about the premises, even to the last of his supplies of the necessities of life. He made no remonstrance, and one by one he saw all his belongings disappear. That night, alone in his empty hut, he heard the sound of the assembling of the people outside. Then he heard the chief harangue the crowd and tell them of all the kindnesses the missionary had shown to the tribe and how ungrateful they had been to him in taking away everything he had. They knew he told the truth, and that the missionary had nothing but love for them and had done nothing but good to them, and with simple-hearted repentance they dispersed to their huts and brought back to the missionary everything they had taken away. From that time he had an access to their hearts he never had had before. They wanted to know more about a God who could inspire such self-sacrifice in his followers. Nothing had so strengthened their faith in him and his God as his literal obedience to this teaching of Jesus, and no experience in the mission field had so strengthened his own faith in the protecting care of the Father in heaven.

Of course that incident might have turned out differently. The natives might have remained thieving and unrepentant, and the

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missionary might have died of starvation in the jungle; but in this particular case it turned out in this way. Literal obedience proved to be the best method for the opening of the way for the conquests of the Kingdom. Possibly Jesus was right in thinking that the world would be won most easily and most quickly if all his disciples took these commands literally. We know that the progress of the Kingdom has been shamefully slow through the centuries, and we know that the farther the professed disciples of Jesus have departed from the spirit and the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount the slower that progress has been. Possibly a return to literal obedience would greatly hasten the coming of the King. At least it would be worth while for the Christian Church to give it a trial, especially in view of the fact that the opposite methods have been so unsatisfactory.

2. *Perfect Love.* The key to the interpretation of all of these passages is to be found in unselfish and unfailing love. Jesus makes that perfectly clear in his climax to this section of his Sermon. He goes on at once to say, "*Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to*

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them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," 5. 43-48.

The verb in the future indicative here has the force of an imperative, according to Blass, H. Holtzmann, Bernhard Weiss, Wendt, and most of the authorities. The perfection demanded is perfection in love. We cannot be perfect with the perfection of the infinite attributes of Deity. We cannot be perfect in beauty or wisdom or power, or perhaps even in the complete ideal of human perfection. We can be perfect in love. We can treat every man as a brother and give him all our sympathy and help.

(1) *Defined.* What is this perfect love which is demanded of us? It "may have the warmest affection in it or it may not. It may include passionate regard or it may not. It can be independent of any passing emotion.

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It rests upon deep-seated principle. It is a feeling of affinity with and obligation to the race. It is unselfish devotion to the highest interests of others and of all. It is the fixed purpose to help everybody and to do all we can to make the world better by making every man good. It will feed an enemy when he is hungry and give him drink when he is thirsty. It will suffer long with him and be kind to him. It will bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, endure all things. It will never fail, even as Christ's love never failed. What is the use of attempting to define it? The best definition of it is to be found in the life of Jesus. The best personal exhibition of it will be found in the life of the man who walks even as Jesus walked. No man in himself can attain unto it. This love must come from God, and from him alone. He enables us to love as he enabled Jesus to love. All love is from him."¹ Our love for our enemies will not have any admiration for their wickedness in it, or any affection for their depraved natures or any fellowship with their evil deeds. It will maintain an invincible good will toward them. It will do and suffer anything necessary to bring about their amendment and redemption. We may dislike

¹ Hayes, *John and His Writings*, pp. 177, 178.

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their characters and condemn their behavior, but we will pray and work for their real good and their final salvation, even as Jesus did with his enemies, and even as the Father does with his enemies.

Does anybody become perfect in love? Simon Patrick said of John Smith, the Cambridge Platonist: "Those who knew him well saw love bubbling and springing up in his soul, and flowing out to all; and that love unfeigned, without guile, hypocrisy, or dissimulation. I cannot tell you how his soul was universalized, how tenderly he embraced all God's creatures in his arms, more especially men, and principally those in whom he beheld the image of his heavenly Father." What was possible in John Smith is by the grace of God possible in any man.

Shall we look at a more modern example? One of the clergy in his diocese wrote of Bishop Moule of Durham, "I am afraid I must own that I could not endure his appointment, and he had not been here three months before the Bishop and I were involved in a dispute, which was settled by his giving way in the most generous fashion. Not long after we had a much graver controversy, which went on for months, and was not without extremely unpleasant moments. There came,

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for instance, an interview in his study at Auckland at the close of which I said I could not accept his hospitality to lunch after our very acrimonious discussion. In the most charming way he prevailed upon me to stay, and treated me with overwhelming courtesy, and saw me into his brougham to drive to the station.

“A year or two later a fresh and still more unpleasant dispute arose, and ended as I thought in a final breach between us. Six months later there came another letter, marked, as usual, ‘Private and Confidential.’ I opened it, wondering what fresh trouble was brewing, and read:

“My dear——:

“May I rather abruptly put before you an important question? Will you accept the living of——? It is a most important point of vantage. And it is one where I should rejoice to see *you*. Do not hurry your decision, of course. Your Lord will guide you.

“Ever sincerely yours, H. DUNELM.

“‘Well!’ I said to my wife, ‘he’s a man after all, a man that can bear no grudge.’ ‘Yes,’ she answered, ‘a big man, and a Christian, and a gentleman.’ I used to say that the Bishop was beaten in every one of our dis-

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putes; but he won absolutely at the finish. After all that had happened I felt I had no choice but to go, and for years till his death he had no more devoted friend in the diocese than the man who had so often bitterly opposed him.”²

It is a good example of a modern bishop doing good to those who hated him and blessing those who cursed him and praying for those who despised him; and if this bishop is a shining exception in his ecclesiastical class, it may be because Bishop Moule was what the lady quoted above said of him, not only a bishop but also “a big man and a Christian and a gentleman.”

The love light floods this whole chapter and fills it with new meaning. It is love which takes all the sting out of righteous anger and would make murder impossible because it eliminates and annihilates hate. It is love which triumphs over lust and would make adultery impossible because it would sacrifice a right hand or a right eye before it would injure the beloved one in body or soul. It is love which would abrogate oath-taking and make perjury impossible because it never would deceive for personal advantage or for any other cause. It is love which forbids all

² *The Life of Handley Carr Glyn Moule*, p. 195.

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violence and litigation and makes one generous and unselfish both in his means and in his labor.

Love will sacrifice itself rather than cause another to suffer. Love will be patient and forbearing in all its conduct toward those who injure it. Love never will harbor any spirit of revenge against those who wrong it. Love forgives without limit. Love gives of its good to all who need, without grudging and without respect of persons. Lao-tse was the great prophet of the spiritual life in Chinese history. Confucius was a great moralist but had little spiritual insight. It was Lao-tse who said: "To those who are good, I am good; and to those who are not good, I am also good—and thus all get to be good. To those who are sincere I am sincere; and to those who are not sincere, I am also sincere—and thus all get to be sincere. To recompense injury with kindness, this is the law of life." He said that six centuries before the coming of Jesus. Now Jesus repeats the truth.

He said that the difference between the Christians and other men is a difference of disposition, leading to a difference of method in dealing with evil conditions and men. The worldly man relies upon material power and defensive or aggressive warfare, fostering hate

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and eventuating in death. The spiritual man relies upon spiritual power and aggressive gospel evangelization, propagating love and eventuating in life. The one man sheds his neighbor's blood for his personal and selfish good. The Christian man lays down his own life, if necessary, either for enemies or friends, because he loves them all even as the Father does. Is this true of us or do we fall short of it?

(2) *Love Gives Only Good.* That answers a great deal of the casuistry which has gathered about this command. Are we to give to every one who asks anything of us? No; Jesus never told us to do that. He told us to give because we loved, and therefore to give only what love will dictate. If a child asks us for a razor, we will not give it to him, because we love him. If a man contemplating suicide asks us for a revolver, we will not give it to him, for two reasons; first, because we do not own one and have no use for such a thing, and second, because it would do him more harm than good in his present state of mind. If a man asks us for money in order to purchase bootleg whisky, we do not give it, for three reasons; first, because of a life-long devotion to prohibition; and, second, because we would not be party to any nullifi-

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cation of the federal law; and, third, because it might kill him if he got it.

Augustine asks in this connection: "Does this command mean that no request is ever to be denied? Was Joseph, then, to give to the wife of Potiphar what she asked? or Sussannah to the Jewish elders? Shall I give money to a man to help him in oppressing the innocent? or which I know that he will spend upon his sinful lusts? It is plain that a thousand other monstrous cases of the kind might be cited, down to that of the Carpenters, who justified indulgence in all fleshly lusts by these words, saying, Whatever the flesh asked, they were bound to give it." Augustine proceeds to answer these suggestions in a very common-sense manner. He says that we are to give to everyone but not necessarily everything which he asks. We are to give only what will be for his good. We are to give what will be helpful, not hurtful. We are to give what will make his life richer and happier, and that may involve a seeming denial of what he asks.

On one occasion a man called from the crowd to Jesus, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." Jesus did not give him what he asked. He refused the request. He said, "Man, who

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made me a judge or a divider over you?" Yet he gave to him that asked. He said to him and the others who were listening that day, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Then he went on and told them the parable of the foolish rich man who lost everything he had, including his soul, in one night, and then he added, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."³ He had not given the man just what he asked, but he had given him a priceless parable and some of the best advice he ever had had in his life. So Joseph gave the faithless wife an example of chastity and a stinging rebuke which, if she had only realized it, was the thing of which she had most need.

Love is the law in our giving as in all of our life. Indiscriminate giving may not be loving giving. William Law was a saint, but he did not seem to have much sense in his giving. The story goes that he gave away as much as £2,500 in one year, chiefly in small sums doled out to all and sundry who came into his back yard and asked for it. We are told that this free and indiscriminate giving demoralized the whole neighborhood. It may

³ Luke 12. 13-21.

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well have had that result, and if it did it was not the sort of giving which Jesus would have commended. He commanded only that giving which would have the sanction of reason and love, only that which would make the recipient really better off.

It is not always wise to give to every man just what he asks, even if he thinks it is what he needs, for often a man's own judgment is not as good as that of others in such matters. We always are to give to him that asks, but only what seems to us to be for his good. The command is to be obeyed both in spirit and letter, but, of course, within the limitations of common sense. Wesley suggested some of these limitations when he said, "Give not away that which is another man's, that which is not thine own. Therefore, 1. Take care to owe no man anything: for what thou owest is not thine own, but another man's. 2. Provide for those of thine own household: this also God hath required of thee; and what is necessary to sustain them in life and godliness is not thine own. Then, 3. Give or lend all that remains, from day to day, or from year to year: only first, seeing thou canst not give or lend to all, remember the household of faith."⁴

(3) *Sensible*. It is unfair to Jesus to make

Wesley, *Works*, vol. i, p. 208.

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absurd applications of these precepts and then ridicule their literal interpretation. They are to be understood in the light of the context and the light of Jesus' life and the history of the early church. Jesus was not talking nonsense. The first disciples were not fools. They understood that they were to suffer indignities and oppressions and persecutions in such a patient and non-resisting spirit as would prove that they loved their enemies and prayed for those who despitefully used them, and regarded their souls as more precious than their own personal dignity or their own personal property or their own personal liberty.

They understood that they might be brutally mistreated and wantonly outraged and tyrannously conscripted and yet they never were to relapse from the spirit of love toward those who thus dealt with them. They never were to insist upon justice, if justice meant any lessening of love. They never were to indulge in selfish revenge. Love was to rule in all their conduct. Love was to dominate all their relations to their fellow men. Love must decide what was right in every case. It must know no limits except such as its own common sense might determine. It never must lose its head, as it never must lose heart.

THE SUMMARIZING PRECEPTS

The directions here given show that it never may falter nor fail under the most trying circumstances. It must go all lengths in defiance of worldly prudence and legal constraints and selfish considerations.

Love must be obeyed absolutely and literally in all things and at all times. To win their enemies to right minds and right conduct they must love them and bless them and pray for them and render good for all their evil until their hearts were melted and they too had become willing to be members of the heavenly kingdom and children of the Father of love. To render evil for good was to be devilish, and no one with the heart of a man would persist in fiendish behavior under the persistent persuasions of love. To render evil for evil was natural for men, and if men did not do it, it must be because they had been touched by some blessed and supernatural power. To render good for evil was godlike; and if men did that, they had become like the Father in heaven.

Such conduct was possible only to those who were God-possessed and God-inspired. It would win the respect and command the allegiance of all men in time. It is the only finally effective way to decrease evil in the world. If an evil man strikes us and we strike

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back, there are two bruised faces instead of one and there is likely to be an excess of anger on both sides. Matters are worse instead of better than before, so far as the personal relations involved are concerned.

On the other hand, if we prefer to suffer a repetition of personal injury rather than to return it, if we turn the other cheek in patient good will and persistent love, it is possible that the bully will be put to shame and that the brute will be won to some sense of decency and fairplay. A man cannot long continue to consider himself noble and brave if he is fighting a non-resister. It is not even as exhilarating as standing up to a punching-bag. A man begins to look ridiculous rather than inspiring if he continues to punch an unresisting foe; and if that foe proclaims himself a friend, willing to endure insult and injury rather than retaliate or display any ill will, the voice of God in the most hardened heart is likely to make itself heard in time, conscience will speak at last, and it will tell the injurious person that he is more of a brute than a man and that it will be far more manly for him to quit pounding with his fists and shake hands and be at peace. If that result is reached, there will be less evil in the world than before.

THE SUMMARIZING PRECEPTS

Any attempt at retaliation, any endeavor to conquer evil with evil, simply strengthens the evil already in existence and adds to the sum total of evil in the world. To be eliminated evil must be overcome with good. That is common sense. That is highest wisdom. That is the final truth. Personal violence never can be brought to an end by retaliation. Jesus suggested that nonresistance might bring about that blessed consummation. He said: "Are you struck on one cheek, turn the other. Do you suffer from legalized robbery? Give more than the law demands. Are you impressed into disagreeable service? Do more than is required of you. Manifest persistent good will. Love everybody: and sometime everybody will be won by love."

In the Dhammapada, containing the highest precepts of Buddha, we find these words:

"Let us live happily, then, not hating those
who hate us!

Let us live free from hatred among men who
hate!

Let us conquer the churlish by a gift, the
liar by truth."

In this great Sermon Jesus says, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them

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which despitefully use you and persecute you." It is the highest wisdom yet given to men. Sometime the world will come to believe it, and then the world will be saved. Sometime the church will come to believe it, and then it will be the saviour of the world.

Look at this black army of antagonists: enemies, persecutors, haters, cursers, them that despitefully use us! What does Jesus say that we must do to them? We must love them. They hate us, but we must love them. We must pray for them. They despise us, but we must include them in our prayers. They do us evil, but we must do them good. They do ugly things to us, but we must do the beautiful thing to them. They curse us, but we must bless them. We must ask for heaven in behalf of those who would consign us to hell. While they seek for our destruction we must seek for their redemption. While they plan our ill we must plan and pray for their welfare. We must preserve our love spirit and our love attitude and our love activities in the face of all antagonism and persecution and hate. Thus, and thus only, will we be children of our Father in heaven.

CHAPTER X

LOVE OR HATE?

1. *Love.* The command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor," is to be found in the Old Testament, and the context makes it clear that the neighbor is a compatriot.¹ The explicit command to hate the enemy is not found in the Old Testament; it is simply an inference from the restriction of the command to love the neighbor to "the children of thy people." On the contrary, we find Job saying, "I rejoiced" not "at the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him: neither have I suffered my mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul,"² and in the book of Proverbs there is the passage quoted by Paul in the Epistle to the Romans as worthily representing the spirit of the New Testament revelation, "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee."³ The spirit of the law was not

¹ Lev. 19. 18.

² Job 31. 29, 30.

³ Prov. 25. 21.

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that of hatred to anybody, but in the later days the interpretation of the law by the scribes and elders had led practically to that result.

2. *Hate.* In the Apology of Josephus we find him answering the charges of Apollonius of Rhodes that the Jews were men-haters, and refused to have any communications with those who differed with them in religious belief or in habit of life, and also the charges of Lysimachus of Alexandria that Moses had commanded them neither to be kindly disposed toward any one of mankind, nor to give him counsel for the best, but, rather, for the worse. Diodorus Siculus also blamed Moses for the fact that the Jews alone of all nations held aloof from intercourse with any other nation, and made a tradition of their hatred of men and were not friendly disposed at all. Paul declared of some of the Jews of his own day that they were contrary to all men,⁴ at feud with the whole world, hated by everybody and hating everybody. These charges are extravagant, but there was some reason for them in both the teaching and the practice of the inter-Testamental times. It is to these traditions of the elders that Jesus here refers.

⁴ 1 Thess. 2. 15.

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Too many professing Christians have been more faithful to these traditions than they have been to the teachings of Jesus. John Wesley lamented the condition of affairs in his day. "These Christian kingdoms that are tearing out each other's bowels, desolating one another with fire and sword! These Christian armies, that are sending each other by thousands, by ten thousands, quick into hell! These Christian nations that are all on fire with intestine broils, party against party, faction against faction! These Christian cities, where deceit and fraud, oppression and wrong, yea, robbery and murder, go not out of their streets! These Christian families, torn asunder with envy, jealousy, anger, domestic jars, without number, without end!"⁵ It seems like a picture of our own day as well.

3. *Apostate Church.* In our own day we have heard the same gospel of hate for the enemy preached by high officials in the church, although it is not to be found in their and our New Testament. We have heard them say that we ought to hate our enemies with a deadly hatred as the enemies of God and man, that we ought to pray for their destruction by land and by sea, that we ought to shoot them and shell them and bomb them and burn them

⁵ Wesley, *Works*, vol. i, p. 198.

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and blockade their ports until thousands of their women and children died of starvation, a more horrible death than if they had been dashed against the stones. Nothing could have been further from the teaching of Jesus. Nothing could have been nearer the teaching of anti-Christ. It has been the negation of all Christian thought. It has been the abnegation of all Christian principle.

Jingoism and militarism have exalted themselves above all that is called God or has been worshiped as God revealed in Jesus. They have seated themselves in the temples of God and have set themselves forth as the representatives of God. In the name of the Prince of Peace they have preached the glory and necessity of war. They have declared that war was a necessary evil. They have approved its wholesale murders in behalf of patriotism and progress. As the representatives of Him who died to save others they have exhorted the youth of the land to go forth and kill others that they may be saved. As the ambassadors of reconciliation they have been the apostles of national aggression and international dissension.

Under their guidance the people have been drugged into strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; and Christian brethren have gone

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forth with consciences appeased for the moment to kill each other with the approval of the church behind them and the blessing of their ministers upon them, on both sides of the opposing lines! It was just as true in Germany as it was in America. It was just as true in America as it was in Germany. The preachers either declared that war was not morally evil, or that it was more good than evil, or that it was right to do moral evil in a good cause, which was tantamount to saying that the best way to serve God in the end was to serve the devil in the meantime. Could anything have been more physically fratricidal and morally suicidal?

Could there be a greater travesty of the reality of Christian faith than these preachers have presented, fulminating from their antagonistic pulpits the same gospel of religious patriotism on both sides of the conflict, patriotism being the principal thing and religion being subordinated to it? Could there be a greater denial of the Lord who bought them with his own blood than that of these churches, going back to the Old Testament law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth and forgetting the new law of the kingdom preached by Jesus, the law of love for all enemies and blessing for all cursers,

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and good for all haters, and prayers for all persecutors? In the world-wide apostasy of Christendom what hope is there of better things until there is a world-wide repentance and willingness to begin again at the beginning and do our first works over in meekness and love?

4. *The Early Church.* The first disciples had learned the secret of Jesus. They conquered the world in those first centuries by themselves continually for others' good. They endured wrongs patiently and sacrificed themselves continually for other's good. They went to the cross and the stake, rejoicing that they could suffer for the sake of Him who had redeemed them and taught them how to live the blessed life; and the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church. Justin Martyr said: "We who had been filled with war and mutual slaughter and every wickedness have each one—all the world over—changed the instruments of war, the swords into plows and the spears into farming instruments, and we cultivate piety, righteousness, love for men, faith and hope which is from the Father himself through the Crucified One."⁶

In 298 A. D. Marcellus, the centurion, pre-

⁶ Justin Martyr, *Apology*, xxxix, 1-3; cf. xiv, 3.

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ferred martyrdom to military service, and he died saying, "It is not lawful for a Christian to bear arms for any earthly consideration." In 295 A. D. Maximilian refused military service because he was a Christian and could not do evil. He was put to death, and has been canonized by the Roman Catholic Church. At least one of the saints on their calendar is a man who became a martyr because he was a conscientious objector.

Tertullian wrote, "Our religion teaches that it is better to be killed than to kill."⁷ He asked: "Shall it be lawful to make an occupation of the sword, when the Lord proclaims that he who takes the sword shall perish with the sword? And shall the son of peace take part in a battle, when it does not even become him to sue at law? And shall he apply the chain and prison, and torture and punishment, who is not even the avenger of his own wrongs?"⁸ He declared that when Peter cut off the ear of Malchus, Jesus "cursed the works of the sword forever after,"⁹ and "in disarming Peter he ungirded every soldier."¹⁰

Lactantius described the Christians as

⁷ Tertullian, *Apology*, 37.

⁸ Tertullian, *De Corona*, 11.

⁹ Tertullian, *Pat.* 3.

¹⁰ Tertullian, *Idol.* 19.

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“those who are ignorant of wars, who preserve concord with all, who are friends even to their enemies, who love all men as brothers, who know how to curb anger and soften with quiet moderation every madness of the mind.”¹¹ Origen is our authority for the statement that Celsus declared that in one part of the Roman army, representing at least a third of all the Roman forces, not one Christian could be found; and Origen says, “We no longer take sword against a nation nor do we learn any more to make war, having become sons of peace for the sake of Jesus, who is our leader.”¹²

Gibbon himself was no believer, but as a historian he came to the conclusion that “it was impossible that the Christians, without renouncing a more sacred duty, could assume the characters of soldiers, of magistrates, or of princes.” Johannes Weiss is completely justified by the facts when he asserts, “Defense with the sword is not only contrary to the spirit of Jesus, but to that of the whole of primitive Christianity.” Harnack has a volume on the Christian religion and the status of the soldier in the first three centuries, which he has entitled *Militia Christi*. It

¹¹ Lactantius, *Inst.*, v, x, 10.

¹² Origen, *Cels.*, v, 33.

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is the best discussion of the subject in modern literature, but it is not translated into English. In the beginning of the book he says, "We shall see that the Christian ethic forbade war absolutely to the Christians," and then later, "Had not Jesus forbidden all revenge, even all retaliation for wrong, and taught complete gentleness and patience? . . . Certainly: and from that it followed without question, that a Christian might not of his own free will become a soldier. It was not, however, difficult to keep to this rule, and certainly the oldest Christians observed it."¹³

Those Christians of the first centuries did not believe that the teachings of Jesus were to be practiced only in a perfect society, or that they were to affect only inner dispositions and not outward actions, or that they had to do only with the individual and not with social and political relations; and in their simple and straightforward faith they did more to purify the world in which they lived than any succeeding generations of militaristic and compromising Christians ever have been able to accomplish. Possibly they were not such fools as some people seem to think they were. Possibly they were wiser in their day and generation than their critics are. Surely,

¹³ Harnack, *Militia Christi*, s. 11, s. 47.

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they were truer to the teachings of Jesus, as found in the Sermon on the Mount.

5. *Cromwell*. Oliver Cromwell made a curious compilation of the passages in Holy Scripture which he deemed useful to his famous Ironsides and he published it as *The Soldier's Pocket Bible*. It is an interesting fact that he quotes one hundred and twelve verses from the Old Testament and only eight from the New Testament. The apologists for war have to go to the Old Testament for their fireworks. They cannot find anything like a sufficient basis for their preaching in the teachings of Jesus. Cromwell explained to his soldiers that they must hate their enemies, "as they were God's enemies." Then he quoted as his proof passages, "And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to King Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord?"¹⁴ and from the psalmist, "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies."¹⁵

Cromwell did not quote from the Sermon on the Mount at this point, "Ye have heard

¹⁴ 2 Chron. 19. 2.

¹⁵ Psa. 139. 21, 22.

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that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies," and so on; for that would have abrogated all his Old Testament teaching on this subject and replaced it with the higher teaching of forgiving and unselfish love, love like that of the Father for those who hate him as well as for those who love him, love that will do good to all alike and not maim and murder anybody to the glory of God.

6. *Verdict of History.* The Puritan Fathers brought the spirit of Cromwell with them to this new land, and they carried their muskets to all of their meetings; and they had continual trouble with the Indians, and Indian wars and Indian massacres are of frequent occurrence through all their history. William Penn brought the Spirit of Christ into Pennsylvania, and he and his followers lived in peace with the same Indians who killed without mercy the settlers who relied upon firearms to protect them. For seventy years they never lost a faithful member at the hands of the savages, while Indian wars were raging all around them.

Bishop Whipple, of the Protestant Episcopal Church, declared that we have spent five hundred million dollars on Indian wars and

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that there is not a hundred miles from the Atlantic to the Pacific which has not seen a massacre of whites or of Indians in these wars, and then he contrasts the experience of the Canadians, who have had no massacres and have spent no money in Indian wars, but who always have treated the Indians as fellow subjects with property rights and under the protection of the law. With the same Anglo-Saxon race on the north and the south side of the dividing line and with practically the same native tribes with which to deal, the Bishop is sure that the experience of Canada proves that our treatment of our Indians has been unwise and unprofitable as well as un-Christian.

General Sherman's campaign against the Cheyennes cost fifteen million dollars and killed thirty Indians. It cost half a million dollars to kill each one of those Indians. Would it not have been a saner policy to put those millions into missionaries and churches and schools among the Indians and so to have done our best to make them both converted and civilized?

William Penn in his address to the Indians said: "The Great God hath written his law in our hearts by which we are taught and commanded to love and help and do good to one

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another. It is not our custom to use hostile weapons against our fellow creatures, for which reason we come unarmed. Our object is not to do injury, but to do good. We are now met on the broad pathway of good faith and good will, so that no advantage is to be taken on either side, but all is to be openness, brotherhood, and love, while all are to be treated as of the same flesh and blood." He meant what he said, and as soon as the Indians realized it they held his territories sacred from violence of any kind. As Charles Sumner, in *The True Grandeur of Nations*, says, "His people were unmolested and happy, while our colonies, acting upon the policy of the world, building forts and showing themselves in arms, were harassed by perpetual alarms and pursued by the sharp arrows of Indian warfare."

Paton lived among the cannibals in the New Hebrides and converted them at last by the power of his holy life and his Christian preaching, and neither he nor his wife ever carried any lethal weapon for self-defense. Livingstone walked back and forth through the jungles of Africa with only one or two unarmed natives in his train and without a sword or a revolver to his name and without ever killing a man, and he was safer ten times

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over than Stanley was with his cavalcade armed to the teeth.

When the policies of Jesus have been put into practice they have approved themselves as the embodiments of highest wisdom in all the history of the past. The opposite policies have postponed the coming of the Kingdom from age to age, and the last Great War has gone far to discredit Christianity in all the world.

CHAPTER XI

REASONS FOR HOPE

1. *Darkest Hour.* Is it a time then for discouragement? May it not, rather, be a time for hope? How many times in church history faith has burned low and its enemies have seemed triumphant, and then Christianity has revived and prospered as never before! This may be the turning point. Surely, the church can descend no lower in its subservience to secular power than it did during the years of the war. Surely, now we may hope that from the wreck and the ruin of civilization in Europe a better faith and a surer hope and an all-conquering love will spring up in many hearts and that from the remnant of the faithful and true a new church will be born to incarnate the spirit of the beatitudes and of the Sermon on the Mount, and in so doing to inherit the earth and inaugurate the kingdom of God. Sometimes it is darkest just before the dawn.

“Oh, Wind,
If winter comes, can spring be far behind?”
Out of the dead of winter come the harbingers

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of spring, and with the spring come new life, new beauty, and a new world.

2. *Rising Protest.* The only hope of such a consummation is that the church will be willing to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn from him the secret of power and then with holy faith go out to realize it now. The new faith will be the old faith of the early church. The new hope will be the old hope of Christlikeness and Godlikeness in human lives. One thing is sure. There is a rising tide of protest against war. Small groups and larger organizations are formed to fight militarism to the finish. They were crushed ruthlessly during the late war, but they are reviving now. Their influence is larger than their numbers might indicate. They have made the militarists uneasy already.

Appropriations for army and navy are not passed without question. Jingoists must be a little careful in their phraseology and must more or less camouflage their sinister intentions. Nobody would claim to be the cause of the last Great War. All the nations in turn disowned responsibility for it. It was a foundling, an outcast, laid at the door of one nation after another, too hideous a progeny for any people to father it. They all said that it had been caused by "the dissimulation and lust

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of every other nation." What did that mean? It meant that the conscience of the world was aroused as never before in history. It meant that war was universally detested, and the instigators of war were not applauded but execrated. It meant that war can no longer be entered into lightly and unadvisedly, at the caprice of any monarch or statesman. It meant that the common people had to be shown the reason why such an outrage was to be perpetrated upon mankind. That is all to the good.

War is on the way to becoming an outlaw. We are going in the right direction. As individual Christians multiply, the goal of universal peace will draw nearer and nearer. An ever-increasing number will have nothing to do with it. More and more the masses will come to see that common sense is better than insanity and that peace is better than war. There will be a steady growth of conviction of the ultimate wisdom of Christian pacifism. Harry Emerson Fosdick referred to education along this line contemptuously as one of those "panaceas so pitifully inadequate that no one who knows the problem could believe in them."¹ Nevertheless, we believe in it, just as we believe that Jesus believed in it as the

¹ Fosdick, *The Challenge of the Present Crisis*, p. 68.

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only final solution of the problem of war. He believed that the time would come when all men would agree that his word embodied ultimate wisdom. He expected all men to rise to the challenge of it in due time. Many are coming to his conclusions even now.

3. *New Converts.* Dr. R. F. Horton, of London, has expressed their new conviction as follows:

“Until this great, mad, futile, aimless, objectless war occurred; until science revealed its altogether unheard-of possibilities of destruction; until the peace revealed the misery, destitution, dislocation and despair which so vast a disturbance leaves behind it, the church, as a whole, was in some hesitation about its attitude to war. But this war has ended that hesitation. That Christ is wholly, absolutely and irreversibly against the thing called war, as shown in the Flanders battles, in the submarine sinkings, in the air-raids, and blind, senseless destruction of innocent lives, no person who in any way knows Christ can now for a moment doubt. . . . Just as 1862 settled the question for all Christians that Christ was against slavery, 1914-1918 settled the question for all Christians that he is against war.

“Palpably, overwhelmingly, he is against

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this thing which is now called war: the application of science to destroy at sight; to poison, to sink, to bombard from the air; the warring not against armies and fortresses, but against helpless populations and open towns; the sinking not of battleships, but of any ships—this is all unblushing and inexcusable murder, assassination, heartless cruelty. All the glamour of war is gone; chivalry is no more. It is not even brutal (no wild beasts do these things); it is devilish. . . . We are in no doubt since the last war that Christ is against war. He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil; and this is the work of the devil, if anything ever was.

“The whole tissue of lies and delusions, secret diplomacy, espionage, underground preparations; the specious pretenses, the bombastic pretense of noble aims covering the basest designs—this is the masterpiece of the Adversary of Men, who was a murderer from the beginning. And Christ was manifested to defeat this adversary and destroy his works. We now look back with profound reverence to those early Christians, like Tertullian, who recognized at once the incompatibility of fighting with the Christian faith. . . . Christianity in its earlier days understood the mind of Christ, and anticipated

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the conclusion, which we at last, after such miseries and sorrows, such exasperation of the war spirit and of war methods, are now beginning to reach.”²

We rejoice when a man like Dr. Horton finally arrives at the truth. Dr. C. J. Cadoux has written a book in which he shows conclusively that the primitive Christian Church believed that all war was contrary to the spirit and teaching of Christ and that Christians could not go to war in any cause, however just. Harnack writes him, “On the strength of your work one might say, ‘The case is settled.’”

If the church of to-day would take the same attitude, it could bring war to an end in a very short time, and it would regain the moral leadership of the world. If it would take that position at once, there would be intense opposition and immense persecution. Many Christians would be imprisoned and some would die. Multitudes would leave the church for good, but the faithful remnant in its loyalty to Jesus would attract other multitudes in their stead, and in its suffering for righteousness’ sake would attain to a unity of spirit and endeavor unknown since the first centuries of its existence, and in due time would

² Horton, *The Mystical Quest of Christ*, pp. 221-223.

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triumph over all its foes and win the world to Christ.

The way to victory is the way which leads to the cross. So many believe that war ought to be abolished who are unwilling to suffer for that end. They may be willing to talk about the loveliness of peace, but when war comes they immediately run to cover. They are not ready to make any serious sacrifice of their standing with the state and its authorities for the sake of principle.

4. *Preachers.* A ministry loyal to Jesus at all times and under all circumstances could soon bring about and could forever maintain peace among all the nations of men.

In the same way we hope that all peoples will see at last that it is childish to quarrel all the time and puerile to resort to one's fists for the maintenance of one's rights on all occasions, and that it is a mark of the low-grade civilizations and the less developed types of men to desire revenge and to make every offense an excuse for war. Sometime they will prove their mature humanity in their allegiance to the Prince of Peace.

5. *Educated Youth.* Possibly our greatest hope lies in the disillusioned youth of all the lands to-day. They know that the high ideals for which they were asked to sacrifice their

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all were repudiated as soon as the armistice was signed. They know that they were led into the war under false pretenses. They know that the promises made to them of a new and better world order have not been kept. They know that we have a worse world now than we had before. They know that the war to end war has left the world filled with more seeds of future wars than it ever has had in its history. They know now by bitter experience that war is the greatest of all crimes because it includes all other crimes in itself. They know that the men who make wars do not fight them and the young men who fight them are not consulted in the decision of the terms of peace.

“From their high place as the saviours of civilization they find themselves relegated, together, to a nonparticipating isolation, no more consulted in piecing together the remnants of the civilization they saved than in shaping the course of events which first placed it in jeopardy.”³ Many of them are ready to declare that they will not again be victimized in this fashion. “Conditions since 1918 have aroused youth to a consciousness of the utter futility of the World War, of the utter futility of any war. And the secret treaties be-

³ Stanley High, *The Revolt of Youth*, p. 216.

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tween statesmen, the international jealousies fostered in misunderstanding by politicians, underground diplomacy—these are condemned as responsible for the atmosphere in which wars are bred.”⁴

Among the youths of the many lands we are told that “there is a widespread faith in Jesus Christ, but little belief in the organized expression of his spirit. In many places the church is blamed for the World War. Certainly there are few places where one finds that youth regards the church as adequately representing either Christ’s spirit or his New Testament ideal.”⁵ This clear-sighted, clear-thinking body of youth around the world will do much to change the world attitude toward war in their generation. We look to them with high hopes that they will help to bring a better day.

6. *Not in Human Nature?* When Doctor Abbott was a boy he sat by the fireside of a little country inn in Maine and heard some rough country fellows discuss the Sermon on the Mount, and one of them said: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor—nonsense! It is not in human nature.” That is the opinion of most people to-day. “The Sermon is all right as

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

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a collection of lofty ideals. It will do everybody good to look at them and meditate upon them now and then and catch some sense of their sublimity and charm; but they are not to be put into practice in this twentieth century. They are counsels of perfection, not to be realized in present conditions. They represent only eccentric idealism. Society is organized now on the basis of selfish struggle for supremacy and the victory comes to the unscrupulous and the strong. This is no time to practice meekness and poverty of spirit and peacemaking and purity. Sometime it may be that in the evolution of the ages society will be toned up to the point where the Sermon on the Mount will have a chance, but it is too soon now to try to practice it. We postpone all effort in that direction until we have a more favorable environment. We have no hope of attaining this height under present conditions."

As soon as men take this attitude the Sermon has no more practical force over their lives. They can say, "I believe in the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, as ideals for the far future; but they are impracticable for the present. We will postpone all endeavor to practice them, until after the war is over at least." How often we heard that

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during the war period! Doctor Forsyth said: "It is more didactic than useful to tell us that war is the renunciation of Christian ethic. Of course it is. But that would be a good consideration to offer only if mankind were Christian." Since the majority of men are not Christians, and since they therefore declare war upon each other, he thought that Christians because of their loyalty to their country were compelled to take part in it. How about their loyalty to God?

As Christians are they to renounce their own moral principles simply because other men do? Is the individual Christian to allow the conduct of others to determine his own? Is he to be ruled by his conscience or by the crowd? Is he not individually responsible to his Master? Does not the Master say to him, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me"? How much real respect can a man have for himself if he says to Jesus, "As soon as all the Huns and the heathen, the Japanese and the Mexicans and the Turks and all the other peoples in the world become Christian and peaceful, I will be a pacifist too, but as long as the majority are militaristic I must postpone obedience to your commands, and in the meantime I will go out with the rest and use poison gas and machine guns and ex-

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ploding shells to punish all those who refuse to acknowledge thy authority”?

Can anything be more absurd than that? Its inconsistency and absurdity are equaled only by its perversity and disloyalty. To postpone obedience to these precepts until we have a perfect society is to postpone obedience until the time when there are no wrongs to submit to and no enemies to love, and in the final analysis all the talk about “untimely virtues” and “living in an imperfect world” is simply a plea for the renunciation of Christianity, for the present at least, for “some considerable postponement of the Christian ideal,” to use Doctor Forsyth’s phrase,⁶ and the continued conformity to the standards of the un-Christian world.

“Were all the world a paradise of ease
’Twere easy then to live in peace.
Were all men wise, divine, and innocent,
Just, holy, peaceful, and content,
Kind, loving, true, and always good,
As in the golden age they stood;
’Twere easy then to live
In all delight and glory, full of love,
Blest as the angels are above.”⁷

Men are not all good at present; and Jesus

⁶ *The Christian Ethic of War*, p. 27.

⁷ Thomas Traherne.

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never promised that the Christian life would be an easy life. He promised opposition and persecution to all pacifists. Over against all this hesitation and excusing of disobedience Tertullian put the plain and unvarnished truth that war was sin and then concluded, "No necessity of sinning have they whose one necessity is that of not sinning."⁸ It may not be in human nature to be obedient to Christ's commands; but if that is true, it is also true that human nature can be changed.

Professor W. E. Hocking of Harvard University points out that human nature is undoubtedly the most plastic part of the living world, the most adaptable, the most educable. The infancy of man is longest, his instincts least fixed, his brain most unfinished at birth, his powers of habit-making and habit-changing most marked, his susceptibility to social impressions keenest. Nature has provided in man for her own displacement and has left to man the obligation to finish himself. To anyone who asserts that "human nature never changes" it is fair to reply, "It is human nature to change itself."

Now that the war is over, people are as hesitant about attempting to begin to live on these lines as they were before the war and

⁸ Tertullian, *De Corona*, 11.

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during it. War is still on in society, in business, in politics. All our modern life is organized on the basis of competition and aggression. It is as hard to practice these precepts now as it ever was, just as hard as it was when Jesus first spoke them.

Yet he gave them to his disciples, and he seemed to expect them to accept them then and there and to fashion their lives according to them in that day and age. He has been expecting it in every day and age since that time. Through the long centuries of his waiting his heart has been grieved by the apostasy of Christendom from these high ideals. Through the long centuries he has waited for the church to say: "This is what we believe and this is what we stand for. We will begin now to practice what we always have professed. We will begin now to live as Jesus lived and to be perfect even as the Father in heaven is perfect."

When the church does that, it will have the respect instead of the scorn of the world. The materialists will be convinced; the skeptics will be converted; the world will be made over in an astonishingly short time. All moral and social progress has been in the direction of this Sermon. Nothing has hindered its ultimate realization so much as the faithlessness

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of the church. A believing and practicing church could have the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil in three generations or less. A believing and practicing church could change commercial ethics and international morality and make them worthy of the name, and in resolute acceptance of the spirit and the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount it could inaugurate the kingdom of God around the globe in less time than it takes now to convert one heathen nation. The end will never be reached unless we begin. We never will begin until we are sure that these ideals are intended to be attained.

7. *Faith.* We are told with all gravity that the ideals of the Sermon on the Mount are unattainable but that we ought to strive after their attainment nevertheless. We are assured: "It is one of the secrets of the attractiveness of Christ as an ethical teacher, that he holds up before us ideals so great that we can never fully compass them, but are humbled in their presence, but yet so congruous with what is best in us that in struggling up toward them we know that we are realizing our truest manhood."⁹

Aristotle said something about urging men

⁹ D. M. Ross, quoted with approval by Marcus Dods, *The Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 15, 16.

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to an extreme which they dislike in order to produce the happy mean. Christian teachers have seized upon this suggestion and have said that as a crooked stick is made straight by bending it too far in the opposite direction, so Jesus would set before us exaggerated and unattainable ideals, as far as possible removed from our present crookedness, in order that as we strive with utmost effort to attain them we will make ourselves straight. We never will attain them and we never were expected to attain them: but the effort to attain them will do us good. It sounds very pious, but it really is very impious. It accuses Jesus of demanding the impossible and it asserts that his disciples realize their ideal by making fools of themselves in the matter of attempting to attain the impossible.

The baby reaches after the moon. He admires it very much, and he desires to possess it, and he tries for it with all his baby strength. When he gets old enough to know that it cannot be reached he quits trying. It is all right for a baby to reach after the moon. He does not know that he cannot get it. It is perfect foolishness for a man to reach after the moon. He knows that it is unattainable. The mountain-climber tries for the summit,

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but as soon as it is surely determined that that summit is unscalable by man he returns to the valley and is content to live there. Only a fool will continue to try for the unattainable. Only fools will continue to maintain that impracticable ideals are of any value, because it is good for men to strive toward them, even if they never attain them. As soon as men are assured that they are impracticable they no longer strive after them. Evidently, they would be fools if they did. They would be like babies reaching after the moon.

As long as the church maintains the attitude that the ideals of the Sermon on the Mount are not immediately practicable it lays itself open to the charge of professing one thing and practicing another, of claiming the discipleship of Jesus while disclaiming his principles. It will be branded as faithless and hypocritical and apostate and powerless to convince and convert the world. It is not in human nature to do these things; but it was in the nature of Jesus and it is in the nature of God, and it is the promise of God that his children may become partakers of his divine nature through Jesus. His commands are his enablings. His ideals are his promises. Augustine said, "The law was

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given that men might seek grace; grace was given that the law might be fulfilled." Incompetent generals have given impossible orders; but the all-wise God and the all-loving Jesus do not.

8. *Perfection Possible.* When Jesus said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," he was in substance repeating the exhortation of the Old Testament, "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy,"¹⁰ or again, "Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God."¹¹ Be ye perfect!—that is awful. That is like an unscalable mountain peak. As your Father!—there is hope. He pities his children. He comes to their aid. He makes the impossible possible. It is his good pleasure to give us the Kingdom.

Genuine faith in the Fatherhood of God will make faith in a possible perfection in love a possibility. Is he my Father and am I his child? Then at the point of his moral nature our likeness is greater than our difference. I may never be his equal in intellect or in power; I may be like him in his love. If he demands it, my faith is that he will make it possible.

¹⁰ Lev. 19. 2.

¹¹ Deut. 18. 13.

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“So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
So near is God to man,
When Duty whispers low, ‘Thou must,’
The youth replies, ‘I can.’”¹²

Love can bridge the distance between the Creator and the creature, and make us one in mind, one in will, one in spirit, one in loving life.

Flesh and blood cannot be expected to give heed to such commands as these of the great Sermon. They are to be obeyed and fulfilled in the lives of those who have been redeemed and renewed. The new man in Christ Jesus has supernatural resources. A persecuting tyrant was beating one of the early Christians almost to death and he said to the sufferer, “What great matter did Christ ever do you?” “Even this,” said the Christian, “that I can forgive you, though you use me so cruelly.”

Natural goodness cannot attain this height. It is good as far as it goes, but it is inadequate to set up the kingdom of heaven on earth. Mohammedanism is good as far as it goes. It inculcates temperance and regularity in ritual worship and great courage in fighting for the faith; but it promises no regeneration, and the centuries have proved that it tends to moral and social stagnation and death. Let

¹² Ralph Waldo Emerson.

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us lift up our eyes to the heights. Let us look to the hills from whence cometh our strength. Let us sit with Jesus on the Mount of the Sermon until we are ready to attempt with his help the life of the Sermon on the Mount.

He will co-operate with us in all our endeavor. Does he say, "Make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" He says again, "I will give them a new heart, and renew a right spirit within them, and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh: that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them."¹³ Do we fear and tremble before this task? What does Paul say to us? "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."¹⁴ We have an Infinite Helper. We can do all things through Him who strengtheneth us.

John Wesley put the comforting truth most plainly when he said: "Every command in Holy Writ is only a covered promise. . . . God hath engaged to give whatsoever he commands. Does he command us then to 'pray

¹³ Ezek. 36. 26.

¹⁴ Phil. 2. 12, 13.

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without ceasing'? to 'rejoice evermore'? to be 'holy as he is holy'? It is enough: he will work in us this very thing: it shall be unto us according to his word."¹⁵

"Our doubts are traitors,
And make us lose the good we oft might win,
By fearing to attempt."

The verb is not optative in this sentence, it is imperative. That means that behind the commandment there is Infinite Resource. If God be for us, who can be against us? Every command of our God implies the promise of God's aid. All the weapons we need are in his armory and ready for our use. All the food we need is in his larder and its door stands open to our cry. All the strength we need is in his power-house and we can tap it at any time with our prayers. The authority which commands is a guarantee of all the grace it requires. So that we may boldly say with the apostle Paul, "I can do *all* things through Christ which strengtheneth me." The man who falls into line with the Infinite has the infinite tide in his favor. He will be swept on into safe harbor. The man who fights on the side of heaven will find the stars in their courses are fighting for him. The order of

¹⁵ Wesley, *Works*, vol. i, p. 223.

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the universe will be with him and for him. "The unconquered and unconquerable forces" will be at his command.

If we ask the modern psychologist how man may attain to the highest possible for him, he will tell us, "The mind must be nerved and nourished by the suggestion that attainment is possible. This vision of the ideal, this belief in his own power to attain, is enough; the suggestion will work without conscious effort, and, slowly or quickly, a unification of the nature will take place, and man will be a new creature, harmonious with his progressive environment." There is an element of truth in that statement; but how hopeless we would be if our perfection depended upon self-determination and our self-inspiration. Jesus did not leave us to these alone. "He saw that the sinner's imagination must be filled with the idea and with the conviction that it could be attained; but the ideal was not abstract and passive, as mere ideals of right are; it was the living, loving, personal God, invisible but not unknowable, outwardly an alluring attraction, inwardly the dynamic of a new life. 'Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect'—your Father whose activity is manifested in the beauty and growth and care-free life of plant and bird, and in the natural

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parental and brotherly goodness of your hearts. Be inwardly inspired by this Father, who will give his spirit to all who ask.”¹⁶

We are to be like our Father. He will give us light to see and grace to be what he commands. We cannot reject his command and despise his word and continue to be his disciples.

“Love as he loved! How can we soar so high?
He can add wings, when he commands to fly.
Nor should we be with this command dismayed;
He that example gives will give his aid;
For he took flesh, that, where his precepts fail,
His practice, as a pattern, may prevail. . . .

“Love as he loved! A love so unconfined,
With arms extended, would embrace mankind;
Self-love would cease, or be dilated, when
We should behold as many selfs as men;
All of one family, in blood allied—
His precious blood, that for our ransom died.”¹⁷

9. *Two Possibilities.* There are the two possibilities before us. We can live on the

¹⁶ Dougall and Emmet, *The Lord of Thought*, p. 208.

¹⁷ Edmund Waller.

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level of the Dead Sea or we can live here with Jesus on the Horns of Hattin. The Dead Sea is twelve hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean. Everybody has a feeling of lowered vitality who stays there for a single night. It is the home of fever and malaria, and it is impossible to maintain a robust frame or cheerful spirit in its depressing atmosphere. On the mountaintop the air is bracing and the atmosphere is pure, and in the dawn of the new day and the spring of the year and under the inspiration of His youth and enthusiasm we are ready to dare anything he asks of us.

There are the two possibilities before us. There are those who say that we are descended from the brutes and we never can escape from our brute inheritance; that physical laws always will be stronger than moral laws, that men always will fight with tooth and claw and the battle always will go to the physically strong; that nature is stronger than grace and the devil is greater than God, and therefore it is of no use to think of attaining the ideals of the great Sermon. It is the Gospel of the Dead Sea, devitalizing, despairing, untrue. Those who live at that level may call themselves the disciples of Jesus, but as long as they think, or continue to act as if they think,

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that it is impossible to walk in his ways and to live as he commanded, they are not disciples but deceivers and deceived.

On the other hand there are those who not only listen to Jesus, but obey him, who not only make him prominent in their talk and their thought and their profession, but also pre-eminent in their lives; who are not content with just enough religion to make them uncomfortable and give them a consciousness of their duty with no power to fulfill it, but who wholly surrender themselves to the Master for his infilling and enabling and his joy and peace, and who ask in faith for even the greatest things he has promised, knowing that he will be sure to make good his word. They live on the level of the Sermon on the Mount. They walk as Jesus walked. They love as Jesus loved. In so doing they are perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect. They exemplify the heights of Christian living.

If anyone says to them, "You are aiming too high. If you are going to live in a world like this you must be like the men who are in it, if you ever expect to be of any use to them and have any influence over them," they answer: "Our Master has told us, not that we must be like the men of the world, but that we must be like our Father who is in heaven,

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and in that way we will help men most and influence them most for good, for we will be the salt of the earth and the light of the world in just the measure in which we succeed in doing it. We are to be unlike other men. We are to win them by contrast and not by compromise."

If men say to them, "We have seen an end to all perfection. To seek after perfection is to seek for the impossible," they reply: "It was one of the unwritten sayings of our Lord, 'Ask for great things, and the small things will be given unto you. Ask for heavenly things and the earthly things will be given unto you.' Therefore now we say to our soul,

'Nay, falter not—'tis an assured good
To seek the noblest—'tis your only good
Now you have seen it; for that higher vision
Poisons all meaner choice for evermore.'"

There is no suggestion in the New Testament that any disciple may content himself with anything less than the best which is possible to him. The first disciples turned the world upside down not by compromising any of the high standards given them by Jesus, but by refusing to compromise. Jesus said, "Be ye therefore perfect." Paul said, "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear chil-

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dren.”¹⁸ Peter said, “Be ye holy in all manner of conversation.”¹⁹ John said, “These things write I unto you, that ye sin not.”²⁰ It was the Christian’s business to realize these ideals, and the first Christians endeavored to do it. It would be well if all Christians continued that endeavor, for it is as James Bryce said, “Human nature, which may appear to have improved and to be still improving, has not yet come anywhere near to reaching the Christian standard set forth in the New Testament.”²¹

¹⁸ Eph. 5. 1.

¹⁹ 1 Pet. 1. 15.

²⁰ 1 John 2. 1.

²¹ Bryce, *Hindrances to Good Citizenship*, p. 16.

CHAPTER XII

THE DISCIPLES' FREEDOM FROM OSTENTATION

JESUS has delineated the character of the new citizens in the new kingdom, beginning with the beatitudes and climaxing in the exhortation to perfection in love. He has told them what their influence was to be as the salt of the earth and the light of the world. He has set forth their relation to the old law, fulfilling it and transcending it in antiseptic purity of motive and life. He turns now to a more detailed study of the new life of the new citizens of the new kingdom, and the first thing he says about it is that it ought to be free from ostentation. *"Take heed that ye do not your righteous acts before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father who is in heaven,"* 6. 1.

1. *Motive Counts.* The motive counts for everything with the Father. Religious duties are to be performed from religious motives. Self-aggrandizement is not rewarded by him. He gives the kingdom of heaven to those who are poor in spirit, but the rich he sends away empty. He exalts the humble and humbles

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the exalted. The peacock pride of apparel and the parvenu pride of position are bad enough, but the Pharisee's pride in religious performance and racial prerogative was worse. There is a pride of lace and a pride of place and a pride of race and a pride of grace, and the last is the worst of the lot. When men do their religious duty not because their hearts prompt them to do it or because it is right, but only because men will praise them for it and they can be seen doing it, they can take out their reward in their acquired reputation; they will have no reward from God.

“Who judged the Pharisee? What odious cause

Exposed him to the vengeance of the laws? . . .

Was blasphemy his sin? Or did he stray
From the strict duties of the sacred day?

Sit long and late at the carousing board?
(Such were the sins with which he charged
his Lord.)

No—the man's morals were exact. What then?

'Twas his ambition to be seen of men;
His virtues were his pride, and that one vice
Made all his virtues gewgaws of no price;
He wore them, as fine trappings, for a
show—

A praying, synagogue-frequenting beau.”¹

¹ William Cowper.

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2. *Three Relations.* Jesus gives three illustrations, covering the three relations of the religious life, to man, to God, to self. A godly, sober, righteous life has to do with these three relations. A godly life is a godlike life, a life right in its relations to God. A sober life is a temperate life, a life self-disciplined and self-controlled. A righteous life is a life in right relations to one's fellow men. Temptations from the world, the flesh, and the devil assail us in these three relationships. The world may represent the solicitations to evil from our fellow men. The flesh represents the temptations of our own nature, inherited and self-evolved. The devil is the antagonist of God.

Here Jesus makes almsgiving stand for an example of right relation to men, and prayer represents the right relation to God, and fasting expresses the duty of self-subduing and self-mastery. In almsgiving we give of our substance to God, in prayer we offer him our devotion, in fasting we present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service. The three represent our property, our prayer, and our person, our substance, our spirit, and our selves. All of these are concerned in our religious acts, and all of these are to be in all

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sincerity. The hypocrites give alms and pray and fast, but they do these things histrionically rather than sincerely, for parade more than for real piety; and Jesus warns against play-acting instead of reality in all these respects.

I. IN ALMSGIVING. *"Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly,"* 6. 2-4.

1. *A Figure.* It is generally agreed among the authorities that Jesus is using a figurative expression when he speaks of sounding a trumpet. At least it is true that no trace of any such custom in connection with almsgiving can be found in the Jewish literature. The elder Lightfoot was an indefatigable student along these lines and he says, "I have not found, although I have sought for it much and seriously, even the least mention of a trumpet in almsgiving." The trumpet was sounded in the conscious ostentation and publicity of the giving.

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2. *Hypocrites*. It is a figure for public parade and display, just as the clause in the next sentence about the left hand not knowing what the right hand doeth is a figure for modesty and privacy. These hypocrites cannot lay an egg without cackling about it, and Augustine suggested that as the cackling of the hen brings somebody to take the egg away so the boasting of these almsgivers loses them their true reward. They are hypocrites. They are play-actors, and they like to play to full houses. They will resort to anything to draw a crowd. They love the glare of the foot-lights. They are supremely happy when they stand in the spotlight. They make up for their part. They strut and pose. They are Pecksniffs, full of moral maxims and professedly pious deeds, but scoundrels at heart and utterly selfish when most generous in seeming. They are sinners most of all when they play the saint.

“The hypocrite in mask!—he was a man
Who stole the livery of the court of Heaven
To serve the devil in. In virtue’s guise,
Devoured the widow’s bread;
In holy phrase transacted villanies
That common sinners durst not meddle
with!”²

² Robert Pollok, “The Course of Time.”

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Milton described a hypocrite in these words,

“But all was false and hollow, though his
tongue
Dropped manna; and could make the worst
appear
The better reason, to perplex and dash
Maturest counsels.”³

3. *Hypocritical Giving.* Hypocritical generosity may find favor among men, but it does not impose upon the Father in heaven. The man who heads the public subscription list may get a lot of advertising out of it, but the Master may rate some poor widow's mites much higher than his millions ill-gotten and now lavishly given away. The man who founds great institutions and bestows great endowments upon them as an enduring monument to his own name does not thereby have his name written in the Lamb's Book of Life. The man who lays a large bill on the open collection plate and drops a penny into the bag where it cannot be seen by the collector or the congregation has reason to question his own motives in giving. Is he giving that he may have glory of men or for the good of the cause? If he is giving only for self-glory Jesus says that he has his reward in full here

³ Milton, *Paradise Lost*, II. 112.

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and now. His account is receipted. No more is owing to him when he gets to heaven. He has gotten all that he is entitled to, and no further reward can be expected.

4. *Public Giving.* Are all public charities forbidden by these words? Surely not. Giving may be done publicly as well as privately, and it may bring the doer a good name; and yet the Master's commendation may rest upon it. When Mary poured the precious ointment upon his feet did he not accept her gift most graciously and did he not say, "Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her"?⁴ Public charity is one way of letting our light shine before men. In the book of Acts we find that the early church took public collections and appointed officials to attend to their public distribution. It is all a matter of motive in the thought of Jesus. If the motive be right, the giving may be either public or private and it will have equal regard from the Father. With the wrong motive, that of ostentation and parade, the giving had to be public of course. Jesus ridicules it under the figure of the sounding of a trumpet to attract the attention of men, and he contrasts with

⁴ Matt. 26. 13.

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it the almsgiving which is unseen by any and unknown to all but the Father.

5. *Three Refrains.* There are three refrains running through these paragraphs. The word "Father" is repeated nine times. It is the heavenly Father who is kept in view throughout. Six times we are told that the Father "seeth in secret." He knows what no man may know. He searches the heart. He sees the hidden motives. He recognizes the ultimate desire. Seven times the "reward" is mentioned. Sometimes it is the reward from men and sometimes it is the reward from the Father. In either case it is assured, and we are given our choice as to which we shall have.

II. PRAYER. Jesus turns from almsgiving to prayer and makes the same contrast between parade and privacy. "*And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward,*" 6. 5.

1. *Parade.* There may be hypocrisy in prayer! When there is parade in prayer, there is hypocrisy in prayer. "The most eloquent prayer ever addressed to a city congregation" is a play-actor's prayer. The man who selects

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the corner of the street where the tides of traffic coming from four directions can see him at his devotions may be posing and not praying. When a preacher's son goes wrong and is being tried on a murder charge and his father composes a prayer in his behalf and has it published in the papers, one wonders of what service such a prayer can be beyond that of advertising. One does not pray in the newspapers without laying himself open to some suspicion of motive.

2. *Prolixity.* A man's best prayers are not made in public, but in private. A preacher's best prayers are not made in his pulpit, but in his closet. Jesus goes on to say, "*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly,*" 6. 6. There must be no parade in prayer. There must also be no prolixity in prayer. Jesus condemns the two things together. "*But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him,*" 6. 7, 8. Parade in prayer is vulgar; prolixity in prayer is foolish.

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Jesus speaks here as though prolonged prayer with vain repetitions were characteristic of the Gentiles, but at another time he said that the scribes for a pretense made long prayers.⁵ It probably was as true of some of the Jews as it was of any of the Gentiles. Some of the rabbis condemned long prayers, but in others we read, "Everyone that multiplies prayers is heard." Rabbi Judah said, "There are three things which prolong the days and years of a man. The first is if one is lengthy in his prayers. . . . But if one is lengthy in his prayers, that is most excellent."

The Jews prayed regularly three times a day—at nine in the forenoon, at noon, and at three in the afternoon; and on three days in the week the people had meetings for prayers in the synagogue. There were prescribed liturgical forms for prayer, and these forms were to be recited at the prayer time whatever one might be doing and wherever he might be. Of course one could contrive to be on the street corner when the proper time arrived, if one were so inclined.

3. *Vain Repetition.* Repetition for repetition's sake is vain repetition. As long as a prayer can be repeated in all sincerity it may

⁵ Mark 12. 40; Luke 20. 47.

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be efficacious. Yet one wonders why faith may not claim the answer after one petition as well as after fifty repetitions. We have followed our Roman Catholic brethren through their rosary service with that question in mind. The hurried manner in which they go over and over the same form of speech suggests that it is only vain repetition. We often have wondered in following the ritual prayers read and repeated by our Episcopalian friends in service after service whether they possibly could preserve any freshness of intent in proffering them or whether they had not perforce degenerated into a mere performance of routine. It may be just as easy to fall into ruts in extemporized praying, and the oft-repeated phrases in the prayer services of our own less ritualistic churches frequently suggest the inquiry whether it would not be better to repeat the forms sanctioned by the great minds and the great saints of the ages rather than those of some petty individual's private manufacture. Jesus condemns all vain repetition on the ground that it is useless and senseless because the Father knows what we need before we ask him.

We read that Augustine used frequently to spend an entire night in repeating, "*Noverim Te, Domine, noverim me!*" We have heard

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of that evangelist who after the evening service retired to his tent to pray and prayed long and loud until he had awakened all the sleepers in the tents adjoining and then kept on praying hour after hour until in utter exhaustion he was capable only of broken ejaculations, incoherent, but explosive enough and frequent enough to spoil the whole night's sleep for all of his neighbors. Whether his prolonged petitions did him any good they were unable to say, but they were perfectly agreed that his private-public devotions had left them in anything but a prayerful mood.

All repetitions are not vain repetitions. Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane repeated the same words three times. In that great crisis of spiritual agony we may feel sure that all of his soul was poured into each of the three petitions. Paul prayed three times that the thorn in his flesh might be removed. It may be that each time he prayed with a little less conviction. Anyway, after the third time he would seem to have concluded to quit praying for that particular thing. The Psalms are, of course, songs, and in some of them we find ritual repetitions which doubtless add to their impressiveness rather than detract from it. In the longest of them the prayer, "Teach me thy statutes," is repeated seven

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times,⁶ and in another the expression of gratitude to God is repeated twenty-six times in the words, "His mercy endureth forever."⁷ Probably Jesus would not have considered these vain repetitions.

4. *Pattern Prayer.* He proceeds to give a pattern upon which our prayers may be modeled. "*After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen,*" 6. 9-13. Then he emphasized the fifth of these petitions by a further word of explanation. "*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses,*" 6. 14, 15.

In the House of Commons in March, 1921, the statement was made by one of the members that there was a substantially united determination of the British nation that Germany should pay to the limit of her capacity. Mr.

⁶ Psa. 119. 12, 26, 33, 64, 68.

⁷ Psa. 136.

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Arnold Lupton wrote an open letter to the speaker, saying: "That seems to me a perfectly horrible statement to be made by any respectable person two and a half years after the war. For myself, I do not profess to be a Christian, because, since I began carefully to consider all that is implied by the profession of Christianity, I came to the conclusion that I was not prepared to make the necessary sacrifices which should be made by a professor of Christianity, but . . . your statement that Germany must be made to pay to the limit of her capacity is not only not up to the level of the Christian teaching, but is diametrically opposed to it. Those Christians who pray at all pray in the following words: 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.' Now, making Germany pay to the utmost is not forgiveness, it is the most terrible vengeance, and it is a vengeance taken not upon the guilty, but upon the innocent."⁸ It is an illustration of the way in which many professedly Christian people defy the teachings of Jesus in their national and political thinking.

5. *Pharisee's Prayer.* What a contrast there is between this pattern prayer for the disciples and the prayer of the Pharisee in

⁸ Hodgkin, H. T., *The Christian Revolution*, pp. 133, 134.

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the parable who considered himself a pattern in everything. This is a prayer to the Father in heaven. In the parable the Pharisee's prayer is addressed to God and is supposed to be a prayer of thanksgiving to him, but is really a meditative self-congratulation. Jesus says that the Pharisee stood and prayed to himself, with his eye on himself, with himself set up as an idol to worship and congratulate and adore.

Jesus commended his disciples to the secret closet for prayer. The Pharisee stood in the Temple court. Jesus gave his disciples a series of brief petitions for definite blessings. The Pharisee asked for nothing, but spent his whole time in self-congratulation. The disciples' prayer is universal in its outlook and takes all men and all time into the scope of its petition. The Pharisee's prayer is self-centered and never looks beyond his own petty egotism. The disciples' prayer is unselfish, large-hearted, all-inclusive. The Pharisee's prayer included a mention of his brother petitioner, the publican, only to condemn him and despise him. The one shows what prayer ought to be, and the other is almost as good an example of what prayer ought not to be both in the manner of its presentation and the substance of its petition.

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III. FASTING. The Pharisee said in his prayer, "I fast twice in the week." He followed the custom of fasting on Thursday, when Moses was supposed to have gone up on Mount Sinai, and on Monday, when he was supposed to have come down again. Jesus turns his attention next to this habit of fasting. *"Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly,"* 6. 16-18.

It is the same lesson against ostentation in religious acts. If a man fast simply to have the credit among his neighbors for his fasting, that is one thing, and it has its sought-for reward; but if a man fast in order to afflict his soul and to bring the body into control, that is another thing, and as a transaction between a man and his God it needs no parading.

"Is this a fast, to keep
The larder lean?
And clean
From fat of veals and sheep?

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“Is it to quit the dish
Of flesh, yet still
To fill
The platter high with fish?

“Is it to fast an hour,
Or ragg’d to go
Or show
A downcast look and sour?

“No; ’tis a fast, to dole
Thy sheaf of wheat,
And meat,
Unto the hungry soul.

“It is to fast from strife,
From old debate,
And hate;
To circumcise thy life.

“To show a heart grief-rent;
To starve thy sin,
Not bin;
And that’s to keep thy Lent.”⁹

1. *In the Old Testament.* The only fast imposed under the old law was that of the Day of Atonement, a fast of one day.¹⁰ We read of other fasts on special occasions.¹¹ In the later history the feast of Purim was preceded by a fast, and there were fasts when

⁹ Robert Herrick.

¹⁰ Lev. 16. 29-34.

¹¹ 1 Sam. 7. 6. Jer. 36. 9. 2 Sam. 12. 16. Dan. 10. 3.

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the rain failed or the harvests were threatened.

2. *In the New Testament.* Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights.¹² Anna the prophetess fasted and prayed night and day.¹³ In the days of the public ministry Jesus was asked by the disciples of John the Baptist why his disciples did not fast, and he gave the reason why, but he added that the time would come when they would fast because he would be taken from them.¹⁴ The Pharisee boasted that he fasted twice in a week.¹⁵ We are told that the disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees fasted often.¹⁶

The prophets and teachers at Antioch fasted and prayed before the appointment of Barnabas and Saul to their missionary work.¹⁷ Paul said that he was in fastings often.¹⁸ Some of Paul's fasting was forced upon him by his circumstances in all probability, but he may have fasted voluntarily as well. The Christian Church has authorized and commanded fasting through all its history. Wesley, Simeon, Pusey, Maurice, and many of the modern saints have encouraged and practiced fasting.

¹² Matt. 4. 2.

¹³ Luke 2. 37.

¹⁴ Matt. 9. 14, 15.

¹⁵ Luke 18. 12.

¹⁶ Matt. 9. 14.

¹⁷ Acts 13. 2.

¹⁸ 2 Cor. 11. 27.

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3. *In the Church.* Jesus does not explicitly command it in any passage, but he surely seems to expect it among his disciples. He says that when they fast they shall do it in a certain manner, taking it for granted that they would fast and prescribing only certain observances in connection with it. When they were afflicting their souls in fasting they need not afflict other people with any parade of it. They need not go about it with sad and disfigured faces and depress everybody with whom they associated. Let them go about with faces clean and glad so that their very presence would be a tonic influence. They had treasure in heaven and they rejoiced in it, even while they mourned their sins in secret, and the Father who sees in secret was comforting them.

4. *No Hypocrisy.* There would be no hypocrisy in their cheerful appearance. How could there be when they had all the beatitudes in their personal possession? How could there be when they had all the riches of the kingdom of heaven for their own? There was their treasure. Their very poverty of spirit assured them of all of its wealth. They were supremely blessed in comparison with all other men. It was only in relation to the Father that they needed to fast or

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mourn. The transaction between the soul and God was a private one. It need not be advertised to the world. In almsgiving, in prayer, in fasting, in all their religious acts in relation to their fellow men, to God, and to themselves, there was to be no ostentation, no show, no parade.

CHAPTER XIII

THE DISCIPLES' SINGLENESS OF SERVICE

THESE things were to be done, not to be seen by men, but because they were right and to be rewarded by the Father in heaven. He had treasure untold. Service with an eye single to his glory was laying up treasure with him. Jesus goes on to say, "*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also,*" 6. 19-21.

1. *Treasure.* The Master had no thought of discouraging thrift and industry and foresight to provide for all the necessities of life. He is talking about laying up treasure. He is thinking about those who are hoarding wealth. He is thinking about fine raiment not in use, but laid away until the moths get into it and spoil it. He has in thought money

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not in circulation and hidden away in some cavern or cellar or hole in the ground until it gets rusty and ruined in disuse. Thieves do not break through and steal the plain furnishings of a poor man's home. They are after the miser's hoard or the rich man's accumulated wealth.

(1) *Wrongly hoarded.* A miser is a miserable man, miserable in the slow process of gathering his wealth and more miserable when he finds that the moth or the rust or the thief has deprived him of it in the end. Many a man has ruined his health in pursuit of his wealth and then has spent his wealth in trying to recover his health. The rich man of the parable was a fool because he had been laying up riches for himself and was not rich toward God. In the parable of the unrighteous steward the lesson taught was that the good things of this world could be so used as to make friends to receive us into the everlasting habitations. The right use of riches here was a laying up of treasure in heaven.

(2) *Rightly used.* It was a tradition of the first century that King Monobazus was reproached by his people for giving too liberally to the poor and he replied, "My fathers gathered treasures upon earth; I, in heaven:
. . . My fathers gathered them into a place

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over which the hand of man has power; I, into a place over which man's hand has no power: they gathered gold, I gather souls, . . . they for this age, I for the age to come." The thought appears frequently in the later Jewish literature. "If thou hast abundance, give alms accordingly; if thou hast but little, be not afraid to give according to that little; for thou layest up a good treasure for thyself against the day of necessity."¹ "Lay up thy treasure according to the commandments of the Most High, and it shall bring thee more profit than gold."² "He that doeth righteousness treasureth up life for himself with the Lord."³

Jesus was using current phraseology and would not be misunderstood. His hearers would know that almsgiving and prayer and fasting in secret, the cultivation of good character and right relationships with God and men, would be laying up treasure in heaven. Thrift and industry and foresight are presupposed. They are essential to right relationships and good character. The hoarding of wealth and the accumulation of great quantities of it are the practices which are con-

¹ Tobit 4. 8, 9.

² Ecclus. 29. 11.

³ Ps. Sol. 9. 9.

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demned in this paragraph as well as in the next.

(3) *In the Kingdom.* In the kingdom of heaven on earth there will be no such great disparities in material possessions as there are now. Treasures will be laid up not for the exclusive enjoyment of the few, but for the common enjoyment of all. Moth and rust will not corrupt because there will be no hoarding of wealth, but it will be in constant employment for the general good. Thieves will not steal because in a world where no man is greedy and selfish, but all men are loving and laboring for all other men the thieves will be converted and be willing to live on the products of their honest toil as all other folks do. That beatific state of society will come just as soon as there is a singleness of purpose on the part of all to love God as our Father and serve all men as our brothers.

2. *Single-mindedness.* Singleness of eye will fill the whole body with light. That was the next lesson Jesus put into this Sermon. "*The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!*" 6.22, 23. The Tes-

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taments of the Twelve Patriarchs was one of the most popular of the post-canonical Jewish writings. It was written a hundred years before the birth of Jesus and in all probability was familiar to him and his hearers. In it we read,

“The single-minded man coveteth not gold,
He overreacheth not his neighbor,
He longeth not after manifold dainties,
He delighteth not in varied apparel.
He doth not desire to live a long life,
But only waiteth for the will of God.
And the spirits of deceit have no power
against him,
For he looketh not on the beauty of women.
There is no envy in his thoughts,
Nor worry with insatiable desire in his mind,
For he walketh in singleness of soul,
And beholdeth all things in uprightness of
heart,
Shunning eyes made evil through the error
of the world,
Lest he should see the perversion of any of
the commandments of the Lord.”⁴

It is a beautiful passage and worthy of being the source from which Jesus drew his imagery in this portion of the Sermon. Philo had said, “It is as impossible that the love of the world can co-exist with the love of God

⁴ Testament of Issachar, iv, 2-6.

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as for light and darkness to co-exist at the same time with one another.”⁵ Jesus uses the same general figure, making the eye the portal of light for the body and the single eye filling the body with light, but the evil eye, the clouded eye, the blinded eye, filling the body with darkness until all the light which was once in it has become darkness instead and in contrast how great that darkness seems to be. The corruption of the best becomes the worst. Light and darkness cannot co-exist, as Philo said; at least not in the same place.

Jesus drops the figure and states plainly what he means by it, “*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon,*” 6. 24. The disciples of Jesus are to be free from divided effort and distracting care. The man who loves God and serves him with a single eye walks in the light as he is in the light, for God is the Father of lights with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. He who despises God and holds to the service of his enemy is soon found bowing down in secret and dark places to abominations of iniquity.

⁵ Fragments. John of Damascus, 370 B.

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In the days of the later ministry a lawyer asked Jesus a question, "tempting him and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment."⁶ He says the same thing here in the beginning of his ministry. We ought to love the Lord our God with undivided loyalty and affection. He loves us with an infinite love. He asks us to love him wholeheartedly, unreservedly, in return. His is love divine, all loves excelling. He asks that our love to him and his may excel all other loves.

He desires no half-hearted discipleship. He refuses all divided service. He accepts only the supreme throne in the affections, the highest place in the human heart, the whole man's loyalty and devotion and love. He will have no other gods before him. He will occupy no subordinate position. He is God over all, and he must be God alone. His cry is ever, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve."⁷ He accompanies that call with the unqualified statement, "You cannot serve two masters; you cannot serve God and his foe."

⁶ Matt. 22. 35-38.

⁷ Josh. 24. 15.

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This is the first commandment and this is the great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." To be a child of God, to be a disciple of Christ, a man cannot be half-hearted or double-minded or two-souled in his service. He must be out-and-out a Christian. He must be all-and-in-all the Lord's. God will have all the heart or none. He will have no rival in our affections. If we try to set up a rival there, he is ready to withdraw from the field. He is ready to allow us our choice. He is ready to divorce us and set us at liberty.

A pastor received a letter from a lady who was a stranger to him. In the letter she said, "I am a member of the church to which you belong. I write to you as a pastor of that church to help me in my trouble. I married a man a few years ago who used to live in your city. I have just learned that he has another wife, living and undivorced. I have separated from him, and have made application for legal divorce. I wish you would find where his wife resides and forward to her the enclosed letter that I may have her testimony in the divorce suit."

That was the most natural thing, that she should desire to be separated from such a man.

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She was willing to live with him as his wife, if she were his wife in truth; but if there were another wife to whom also he had pledged his faith, she would have nothing to do with him and his love. If a wife is thus jealous of her husband's affections, if she is ready to renounce adulterous love, how much more the holy God in heaven!

There is that tradition of the old King Redwald, who built two altars of worship and he dedicated one to God and the other he dedicated to the devil. He zealously offered sacrifices to God on the one altar; and then he hastened away to the other altar and just as zealously sacrificed there to the devil. That old heathen, King Redwald, said to himself, "God has wonderful power and so has the devil. These are both mighty Lords, and the best thing for me to do is to keep on the good side of both of them." Whether the devil accepted his worship or not, who can tell? but we can feel sure that God never did. What did Jesus say, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

There is a parallel to this tradition concerning King Redwald in our Old Testa-

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ment. There we are told that the king of Assyria carried away the children of Israel into captivity and then put men of many other nations into the cities of Samaria in their stead. These new settlers brought their many different gods with them and worshiped them for a while; but they were troubled by lions and they decided that it was because they had failed to placate the God of the land. So they petitioned the king of Assyria and he sent them a priest from among the captives who "came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the Lord." Then the record is, "They feared the Lord, and served their own gods," sacrificing to all of them together and thus endeavoring to placate all alike.⁸ They would worship all alike, if any one of them would scare away the lions.

Do these illustrations belong only to the old heathen and superstitious times, or are there many people to-day who "fear the Lord" enough to take part in his worship and to give of both their time and their means to his service, while at the same time they "serve their own gods," the gods of pleasure, fashion, greed, the gods of this world as well as the God of all worlds, the Father in heaven?

In the palace of Sanssouci at Potsdam there

⁸ 2 Kings 17. 23-33.

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is a shield which bears this inscription in French, "My soul for God, My heart for the ladies, My life for the king, My honor for myself." It makes a very neat rime in the French and a very neat inscription on the shield, and the old cavalier who carried that shield back there in the Middle Ages may have meant it all right. He may have been a very pious and religious man, as he undoubtedly was a loyal and honorable and gallant one; but that inscription provokes the question as to what was given to God in that division after all.

If the gallant old knight gave his heart to the ladies and his life to the king and his honor to himself, after his heart and his life and his honor were disposed of, how much was left for God anyway? His affection, his honor, his life—we can understand what he meant by these; but his soul, as distinguished from these—we do not see very clearly what that could mean. The women, the king, and he himself get something very conceivable and very substantial: but God is put off with a phrase. The life is embodied and is a material unity. The heart and the honor can be manifested in affection and honesty, in devotion and loyalty. The soul, as distinguished from these things, would seem to be merely

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an invisible abstraction. We can give that to God without losing anything at all.

Are there modern Christians who are making just about that division? The soul for God; but the honor for myself? The soul for God; but my heart for the ladies? The soul for God; but the life for some ruling passion, money-making or self-seeking in some form or another? The lion's share of the heart and the life to selfishness, and what is left over to God; but God says, "All the heart and all the soul and all the mind, all the life and all the man for me; and if there is anything left over, that too is mine! This is the first and great commandment, that there shall be no division of the heart or the soul or the mind or the life or the man in my service. You are to be mine wholly or I cannot make you holy; and that is the design of my gospel for every man."

"God will have all, or none; serve him, or
fall

Down before Baal, Bel, or Belial:

Either be hot, or cold: God doth despise,
Abhor, and spew out all neutralities."⁹

Jesus says here, "No man can serve two masters. . . . Ye cannot serve God and mam-

⁹ Robert Herrick.

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mon.” Bishop Gore reports that Doctor Jowett, Master of Balliol, said to him more than once that he was afraid that there was a great deal more in the New Testament against being rich and in favor of being poor than we liked to recognize. We like possessions: Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor.” We like the pleasures money can buy: Jesus said, “Blessed are those who mourn.” We like position and place and power such as great wealth will bring: Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek.” We hunger and thirst after more and more and more of this world’s goods: Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness alone.”

In the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs we read the truth, “The love of money leadeth to idolatry, because, when led astray through money, men name as gods those who are not gods, and it causeth him who hath it to fall into madness.¹⁰ The supreme love of money is the root of all evil. The supreme love of God is the bringer of all good. They cannot be combined. They are absolutely antagonistic to each other. The one is as light to the life. The other is as darkness to the soul. Mammon worshipers serve the idols of fashion and luxury and selfishness and greed. The

¹⁰ Testament of Judah, xix. i.

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lovers of God serve him alone. Mammon worshipers are anxious about their wealth. They worry to get it and then they worry lest they lose it. The citizens of the new kingdom are to be free from all such distressing cares.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DISCIPLES' FREEDOM FROM ANXIETY

"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:)

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for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore, no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," 6. 25-34.

1. *An Open-Air Sermon.* This is a Sermon preached in God's out-of-doors. There is no smell of the study lamp about it. The fresh breezes of the mountain summit blow through it. It is the early morning in the spring of the year; and a youth who is greater than Saint Francis of Assisi is here. His brain is clear and his eye is full of light. His face shines in the reflected glory of the morning sun and it is radiant with a greater glory from within. He saw the flocks of pigeons whirling about the housetops in the village below. He saw the swallows darting like arrows here and there in search of their food. He saw the sparrows chirping everywhere, little bundles of animation, saucy, venturesome, cheerful, having a perfectly good time all the day long.

He saw the flowers which clothed the hill-sides in patches of brilliant color, wild flowers filling the pastures with perfumes and with

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bees, hiding in the shady ravines, growing in rich clusters among the trees and straggling out among the rocks with their dash of beauty in the midst of the bareness. There was the lily of the field, bright scarlet in color, with flowers like turbans, showy like little Solomons in all their glory, conspicuous everywhere.¹ There were the anemones, lilac and white and red, the commonest and most characteristic of the spring flowers, blooming in all soils and in all situations, covering the mountain slopes and carpeting the plains.² There were the narcissus and the gladiolus and the amaryllis in their red and golden robes of royal magnificence.

Jesus looked at them all and thought that they were fed and clothed by the Father's bounty, fed more abundantly and continuously than the men who reaped and gathered into barns and clothed more beautifully than queens or kings in all their splendid apparel; and he saw how care-free the flowers and the birds seemed to be and his heart was filled with gratitude for the Father's goodness and with faith in the Father's providence and care and he said: "I have told you not to be ostentatious. Behold the birds! how simple and

¹ *Lilium Chalcedonicum* of Linnæus.

² *Anemone Coronaria*.

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unaffected they are, always going about their business without any thought as to whether anybody is looking at them or not, singing simply because they must do it whether anybody hears them or not, utterly indifferent to spectators or auditors, cheerful and unconcerned. 'Consider the flowers! how modest and unassuming they are in their imperial beauty and their regal robes, never caring whether anybody admires them or not, exhaling their perfume on the morning breeze without any thought of passers-by, as free from conceit as they are from care, as free from ostentation as they are full of grace.

"They are not misers, money-grabbers, mammon-worshipers, yet they are as happy as the day is long, perfectly satisfied with the good things which each day brings. I have told you to be without ostentation. If you are free from that vice, you will not be so worried over your household provisions or your wearing apparel; you will be content with simple things. I have told you not to be mammon-worshipers. If you are free from that sin, you will spare yourselves many sorrows and you will not fall into many temptations and snares and many foolish and hurtful desires which plunge men into destruction and perdition.

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“I tell you now to be without anxiety. Look at the flowers and the birds again! Every bird makes of every branch on which he sits and sings a pulpit from which he preaches a gospel of contentment. Every flower cup is filled to the brim with fullness of trust and freedom from care. Hear that songster on the bush yonder! Is he worrying about what will happen next week? See that anemone there among the bare rocks, blooming so bravely in that barren spot. The dry winds will snatch at every particle of moisture, the blistering sun will parch all that soil, but is the anemone worrying about where it will get anything to drink either to-day or to-morrow? There are hidden streams in the limestone strata, there will be dew to-night, there may be rain to-morrow. It does not fret, for it knows that the Father will furnish all of its needs.”

This is an open-air Sermon. Nobody was going to sleep, as they might in the close atmosphere of the synagogue. They watched the flight of the birds and they looked away to the golden clusters and the scarlet patches of the flowers as Jesus talked, and the birds and the flowers were God's preachers and all the sights and sounds of God's out-of-doors. The sparrows spoke of their own insignifi-

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cance and yet of their worth in the Father's eyes. Jesus said at one time, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?"³ and on another occasion he put the same question a little differently, "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings?"⁴ Two sparrows for one penny; how insignificant a price! Then two more sparrows for another penny; could anything be worth less than that? Then one sparrow, the fifth, worth nothing at all, simply thrown in to make it a good bargain. No price paid for it, not even a half penny: and yet Jesus said that that one was not forgotten in the sight of God and not even one sparrow could fall to the ground without the Father's notice. Sparrows are small and insignificant birds; but God sees them, God loves them, God cares for them all. The sparrows were preaching and the gist of their sermon went like this,

"I'm only a little sparrow, a bird of low
degree;
My life is of little value, but the dear Lord
cares for me.
He gives me a coat of feathers—'tis very
plain, I know,
Without a speck of crimson, for it was not
made for show.

³ Matt. 10. 29.

⁴ Luke 12. 6.

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But it keeps me warm in winter, and it
 shields me from the rain;
Were it bordered with gold and purple, per-
 haps it would make me vain.
And now that the springtime cometh, I will
 build me a little nest,
With many a chirp of pleasure, in the spot
 I like the best.
I have no barn nor storehouse, I neither sow
 nor reap;
God gives me a sparrow's portion, and never
 a seed to keep.
If my meat is sometimes scanty, close peck-
 ing makes it sweet;
I have always enough to feed me, and life
 is more than meat.
I know there are many sparrows, all over
 the world they are found;
But our heavenly Father knoweth when *one*
 of us falls to the ground.
Tho' small, we are never forgotten; tho'
 weak, we are never afraid;
For we know that the dear Lord keepeth
 the life of the creatures he made.
I fly through the thickest forest, I alight on
 many a spray;
I have no chart nor compass, but I never
 lose my way.
I just fold my wings at nightfall, wherever
 I happen to be;
For the Father is always watching, and no
 harm can happen to me.

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I am only a little sparrow, a bird of low degree;

But I know that the Father loves me: *Dost thou know his love for thee?"*

It is the sermon of the sparrows, insignificant little preachers of great truths. If we heed their preaching we will be ready to say with George Macdonald,

"Lord, according to thy words,
I have considered thy birds;
And I find their life good,
And better the better understood:
Sowing neither corn nor wheat
They have all that they can eat;
Reaping no more than they sow
They have more than they could stow;
Having neither barn nor store,
Hungry again, they eat more.

It cometh therefore to this, Lord;
I have considered thy word,
And henceforth will be thy bird."

God cares for the birds: how much more will he care for all of his bairns! God cares for all of the birds. William Blake was right when he sang,

"A robin redbreast in a cage
Puts all heaven in a rage;
A skylark wounded on the wing
Doth make a cherub cease to sing."

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Jesus said at one time, "Consider the ravens." While the sparrow is an insignificant bird the raven is an unclean one. The sparrows are friendly and unafraid; they may have been twittering all about Jesus as he stood on the mountaintop and preached his Sermon. In the distance two ravens may have been floating and looking for their prey. Poe said that the raven was a "grim, ungainly, gaunt, and ominous bird," and sometimes it feasts in such a fashion that *ravenous* seems to be the only word fit to describe it. Yet God provides for it and we are told that ravens frequently live longer than men.

Jesus did not say, "Consider the eagle, the monarch of the air. He rules by his own might and compels respect by his own prowess," or "Consider the nightingale, charming all ears by its melodies and reminding us of angel choirs." He said, "Consider the sparrows; consider the ravens; consider the fowls of the air about you every day: consider the smallest, the most insignificant, the most uninteresting or revolting among them. They all have their lessons for you. They all preach good theology. They all speak of the Father's unfailing providence and care.

"Then, consider these lilies which clothe the mountainsides with beauty at this time of the

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year. Glorious, flaming flowers they are, almost too beautiful for our poor earth; speaking to us of the greater beauties that lie beyond.

‘How wonderful creation is,
The world that thou dost bless!
But what, O then, must thou be like,
Eternal loveliness?’

They neither toil nor spin and yet the Lord provides these glorious garments for them, more than regal in their splendor, more beautiful than Solomon ever was able to afford. God clothes them. These robes come from his wardrobe and they only suggest in their profusion and their beauty the greater care and the inexhaustible resources God has in store for you.”

2. *Solomon.* Jesus loved the birds and the flowers. He would rather visit with them and invite his soul in their company than to spend an hour in the palace with King Solomon.

“When the great king did almost strain
The wondrous treasures of his wealth and
brain,
His royal guest to entertain;
Though she on silver floors did tread,
With bright Assyrian carpets on them
spread,
To hide the metal’s poverty;

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Though she looked up to roofs of gold,
And nought around her could behold
But silk and rich embroidery,
And Babylonian tapestry,
And wealthy Hiram's princely dye;
Though Ophir's starry stones met every-
where her eye;
Though she herself, and her gay host were
drest
With all the shining glories of the East;
When lavish art her costly work had done,
The honor and the prize of bravery
Was by the garden from the palace won;
And every rose and lily there did stand
Better attired by nature's hand."⁵

King Solomon was a hothouse plant. He was a gayly plumaged bird in a golden cage. Jesus did not care much for his magnificence. He mentions him only twice in our records of his sayings and each time in rather slighting comparison.⁶ He may have had a great deal of pomp, and he may have indulged in a great deal of vainglory, and the Queen of Sheba may have come from the ends of the earth to hear his wisdom and to see his display, but he was not half so great as the lowly Son of Man who did not know where he could lay his head from night to night, who was born in a stable because all the hotel accommodations

⁵ Abraham Cowley.

⁶ Matthew 6. 29; 12. 42.

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had been taken by the well-to-do, and who died on a cross forsaken by his friends as an outcast and criminal. He did not have much use for the artificial finery of Solomon's court. He would rather walk for an hour in the fields among the field flowers than to spend a day in a royal residence. He thought that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. The royal robes ministered to nothing but vanity. The grace of the fashion of the flower was carried with consummate modesty.

3. *Refrain.* To Jesus the birds were God's winged messengers of peace and trust, and the flowers were the preachers of beauty and brightness and contentment in God's providence and love. From them he takes this text, "Be not anxious." Three times he repeats the exhortation in this short section of the Sermon, and six times the word "anxiety" as verb and noun occurs. It is the recurring refrain in this portion of the discourse. The word stands for harassing care. It has nothing to do with prudent foresight. Jesus believed in practical common sense as much as anyone. He regretted the fact that the children of this world often were wiser in their generation than the children of light.⁷ He

⁷ Luke 16. 8.

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said that no one ought to build a tower without first estimating the cost.⁸ He ridiculed the king who would go to war without knowing the relative resources of his kingdom and that of his antagonist.⁹

Thrift and industry and foresight are taken for granted in this paragraph as in the one concerning laying up treasure. Jesus is not thinking of any of those things now. Birds work hard to get their food; but they do not work to exhaustion; those who study the birds and their habits tell us that the bird's industry is simply amazing; but they never tell about any birds dying of nervous prostration. The flowers fulfill all their functions most diligently and most faithfully. They do all that they are expected to do; but, having done that, they do not worry. They never have any mental collapse or nervous or physical exhaustion. That is the one lesson to which Jesus draws attention here. It is the lesson of the rime so popular and so worthy of being kept in mind.

"The world is wide
In time and tide,
And God is Guide,
So do not hurry.

⁸ Luke 14. 28-30.

⁹ Luke 14. 31, 32.

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“That man is blessed
Who does his best,
And leaves the rest,
So do not worry.”

What is the use of worrying? Nothing comes to us before its appointed time. Worry will not bring it any sooner. Nothing comes to us too soon in this life except sorrow. Worry anticipates the coming of sorrow and the worried man suffers beforehand as well as when the sorrow has arrived. What is the use of that? What is the use of doubling the sorrow? What is the use of suffering twice? Prudent foresight is one thing; useless worry is another. It is useless worry that Jesus is talking about here. Useless worry is simply ridiculous, and Jesus suggests the utter absurdity of it in the question he puts, “Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?”

4. *Stature.* Worry can shorten the stature but it cannot lengthen it. Men’s shoulders get stooped under the cares of this world. Their backs get bent under the burdens of life. They do not stand as straight and as tall in old age as they did in their prime if they have allowed themselves to be harassed and anxious all their days. Who by worrying can add three feet to his height? Most of us would

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be monstrosities if we succeeded in doing it. Three inches more would make us conspicuously tall. Three feet more would make us ridiculous giants. Who would worry to such an end? The very question suggests the absurdity of the thing. Worrying to bring about such a result would be no more foolish or useless than worrying about anything else.

Worry accomplishes nothing. It distracts the mind and dissipates energy and discourages effort and is bad, and only bad, mentally, physically, and spiritually. It is best to be without worry in everything. It is best to live without anxiety; and if we do, our chances are all the better for adding to our stature if we desire to do that. Not one man in ten thousand desires it, and there is very little worry in the world in that matter.

5. *Life*. Possibly the word¹¹ translated "stature" here ought to be translated "duration of life." Achelis, Bleek, Feine, Ibbeken, Meyer, Thayer, Tholuck, Bernhard Weiss and most of the modern commentators think this would be the better rendering. The word is found frequently in the papyri and it never means "stature." It has both meanings in our New Testament. The psalmist applied the thought of lineal measurement to human

¹¹ ἡλικία.

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life when he said, "Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth."¹² Thousands of people would like to add to their length of life, and they worry a great deal about it. Worry never helps to that end. Worry killed the cat, and it has killed many women and men. A cubit added to the length of a man's life would be a very little thing, but worry will not even add one cubit. Then, why worry?

Three times Jesus tells us here, "Be not anxious; do not worry."¹³ Paul wrote the same exhortation to the Philippians, "Be not anxious about anything; worry about nothing,"¹⁴ and the word "nothing" stands first in his sentence and is emphatic by position. Paul says just what Jesus says, "In nothing, in absolutely no single thing be anxious or worried. Your life ought to be free from any experience of that kind. Your life ought to be above any such thing." It is the same verb used by Jesus and by Paul, and it is the same exhortation, short and sharp, curt and crisp, without exception, without limitation, "You are to be anxious about nothing; you are not to worry about anything. You are to live above these things or you will live below the

¹² Psa. 39. 5.

¹³ περιμνᾶτε.

¹⁴ Phil. 4. 6.

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possibilities of the children of the Father and the disciples of Jesus."

6. *Cares.* The Master spoke a parable at one time about a sower who went forth to sow, and some of the seed fell among thorns and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it; and when he explained the parable he said, "That which fell among thorns are they which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to perfection."¹⁵ The word for "cares" is the same word which Jesus uses here in the Sermon. They are harassing and distracting anxieties and worries. They are the thorns which spring up and choke the good seed. The thorns are interlopers and have no business in the field.

They are like highwaymen or thieves who spring up suddenly about a man in his own premises, and throw him down and choke the life out of him. When a man finds himself in that predicament, suddenly surrounded by footpads or burglars, he knows well enough that one of two things will happen: either he will surrender to them or they will surrender to him. The Master said that it was just so with the cares of this life. We will be choked

¹⁵ Luke 8. 14.

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by them or we will overcome and eliminate them. They will down us or we will down them. They will either wave in triumph above our heads or we will trample them in triumph under our feet. We will have our choice. Either we can live above the cares of this life or the cares of the world will down us and choke us. The man whom the cares have choked is a typical worldling. The man who lives above them is a typical disciple.

As the Greek word which they used clearly shows, the cares to which Jesus and Paul refer are the useless worries of life, the things which cause anxiety and distraction and harassment, the things which forbid and are inconsistent with the perfect peace of the disciples' experience, the perfect confidence they have in the Father's providence and love, anything which hinders the concentration of every effort and energy upon their aspiration to realize the kingdom of God and his righteousness. A son of God must live above these things, or he is liable to lose his filial faith and his divine relationship. The disciple of Jesus must live above these things, or he is no better than the worldling and no whit different from him.

A balloonist found himself in the midst of a furious wind-storm in mid-ascent and he

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realized that to remain in it would mean destruction to his balloon and death to himself. He threw overboard the weights he was carrying as ballast until his balloon shot up into mid-heaven, where he found that above the storm there was perfect calm. The disciple who lives on the plane where his life is swept continuously by a storm of business or household or any kind of temporal and worldly distractions will soon find that his faith and peace and love are getting weather-worn and insecure and are threatened with destruction. Like a costly East Indian shawl hung up in the wind, they are being snapped and lashed and frayed into useless fringe.

The spirit of the disciple ought to be superior to all such harassing storms of anxiety, all such tempests of distraction; for it is his privilege to rise into the perfect peace of him whose mind is stayed on God. The balloon in the tempest was helpless. The balloon above the storm was safe. The man whose life is filled with frettings and worryings and anxieties has a wretched existence, but the man who lives above such things in his confidence in God's grace and power may live the life of the beatitudes and then may have the blessed death of those who die in peace in the Lord.

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The disciple of Jesus must live above the cares of this life, must live in spiritual serenity superior to them, or he will be like the good seed choked by thorns, like the honest householder garroted and gagged by footpads and thieves, like the balloon tempest-lashed and storm-driven to imminent destruction, like a costly fabric frayed to useless fringe. There is a carefulness which is characteristic of any strong character. There is a forethought which is the product of faith. Jesus and Paul were not talking about these things. There are cares and responsibilities which are unavoidable and which develop in us a physical and mental and spiritual manhood. Jesus and Paul have nothing to say against these. They are ruling out of the believer's life all the worryings and frettings and anxieties and distractions which hinder or altogether prevent his seeking first and last and all the time the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

To the follower of Jesus the Kingdom is the all-important thing. Its interests will dominate every other interest in his life. He will allow nothing to distract him from his supreme devotion to the Master's cause. We sometimes say of a man that he is immersed in his business, and we understand that to mean that his time and his thought and his

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attention are given wholly to it. He is absorbed by it. He has no interest in anything except it. He is the abject slave of that single master. It demands and receives the entire service of his life. The business may be a perfectly honest and legitimate business, but if a man is wholly immersed in it, it will not be long until he is bald-headed and stoop-shouldered and hollow-eyed and tottering upon the verge of an untimely grave; and when he topples over the edge of it he falls into the grave of a worldling and not of one who has been living the Sermon on the Mount.

The disciple of Jesus never will get immersed in his business in that sense. He will not be its slave, but its master. He will be superior to it. He will conduct his business as for his Lord. He will meet all its responsibilities like a man, and by God's grace and help he will carry them to the end; but he never will allow them to worry him or fret him or disturb him or distract him until he has lost fellowship with the Father and faith in his providence. As far as his business cares are legitimate he will assume them all, but he will not permit himself to become so absorbed in them that he will be compelled to slight or neglect the things which are of more importance than meat or raiment or

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any merely temporal affairs. He never will know over-wrought anxiety and feverish dread. He will trust God, and do the right and go ahead without fear.

We say that certain persons are immersed in business and others are immersed in politics and others are immersed in pleasure, and we know what that figure means. We saw a young girl immersed in a baptistry. She was led down into the water slowly, step by step, until her clothes were saturated with it and they clung about her in the most uncomfortable fashion. Then she was plunged backward into the water, buried in it, and it ran into her nose until it filled her mouth and throat, and she came up blinded and strangling and gasping and frightened nearly to death with the shock, and the minister took his handkerchief and wiped her eyes and her face until she could breathe and see, and then he led her out slowly, step by step, trembling and nervously chilled and looking for all the world like a half-drowned rat. That was immersion; and it is just in that fashion that some men get immersed in their business and some women get immersed in their pleasures. They sink into perfect self-surrender to them, until the business cares and perplexities or their social engagements and follies rise

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higher and higher and sweep over their heads and leave them sprawling and helpless under the flood. If they went into these pursuits with any spiritual enthusiasms or aspirations, they get such things choked and strangled out of them in a surprisingly short time.

Let us look for a moment on a contrasting picture. Here is a sea-bather, at home in the surf. He comes down for his regular exercise and refreshment in the water. He does not go into the water backward or dip his head under until he chokes. He faces the tidal wave as it comes in. He leaps upon it as though it were a cushion of down. There he rides as its master, swims like a sea-petrel, floats like a duck. As the waves come rolling in he rises above them one by one. He comes out from the surf with glowing cheeks, refreshed and invigorated with the sea-breeze and the salt bath more than with new wine. He is the symbol of the trusting child of God who does not strangle and choke under the flood of business or political or society cares and perplexities and distractions which pour in upon him, but who rises above these things as their master. He is ready to say, "Let cares like a wild deluge come, let storms of sorrow fall, I have learned how to swim, I have learned how to get strength and enjoy-

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ment out of these things, how to rise above them and to find in them the very power to buoy my soul upward to God."

There it is. Jesus believed that the soul immersed in business or political or social distractions was liable to get choked by their thorns and cares, but he also believed that it was possible for his disciples to live above all disabling distractions and anxieties and worryings over business or politics or the household or the daily necessities of life and the material possessions of this world and in calm confidence in God to go on their way with the spiritual serenity he himself had.

7. *Jesus.* How was it that Jesus always was so serene? There was enough of disappointment and misunderstanding and perplexity and trial and suffering and sorrow in the life of Jesus to have broken his heart any day that he lived, if he had given way to it. Yet he went through his ministry serene as the sun in mid-heaven. He was in the world, but he was not immersed in the things of this world. He was in the world, but he was not of the world. He lived here among men, but he was as much above the things of this earth as the sun in mid-heaven. He was more heavily burdened than any mortal ever was before him, but he had learned to cast his burden

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on the Lord God and he had learned that God, the Father, would take care of him.

A sudden storm swept down upon the surface of the lake, and the disciples were filled with terror and they were worried beyond measure. How was it with Jesus? He had curled up on the steersman's cushion and gone to sleep! When they roused him from his deep slumber he rebuked them for their little faith and then made the sea as quiet as his own spirit was. What was the use of worrying about a little thing like that? That narrative might be considered a symbol of his abiding experience.

He lived a day at a time. He was not anxious for the morrow. He left the morrow to take care of itself. His brethren wanted him to go up to the feast in Jerusalem, and he told them that he was not going. Later he changed his mind and came to the conclusion that it was the Father's will for him, and went. Nobody could hurry him into premature planning. He waited for events to prove the wisdom of any action.¹⁶ There was a sublime air of leisure about him all the time. He was on his way through Samaria and most Jews were in haste to get through that hated territory, but Jesus sat at leisure and rested

¹⁶ John 7. 2-10.

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by Jacob's well and had prolonged conversation with a woman from the neighboring town and then stayed there two days to get acquainted with the people and give them his gospel.¹⁷

He was on his way to answer the urgent appeal of Jaira to help his dying daughter, and the people were thronging about him in their hot haste to see another wonder when Jesus halted the procession to have conversation with some unknown woman who also had her pressing need.¹⁸ The father may have stood by wringing his hands in his anxiety and the people may have been dancing up and down in their impatience at this delay, but Jesus was not to be hurried; he must examine this woman as to her faith and then he must send her away in peace.

He had set his face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem and all the people accompanied him on the way. A poor beggar hearing the commotion cried to him for help and was roundly rebuked by those who went before and told to hold his peace: but the Master had heard the cry and he halted the whole procession until the man's sight had been restored. He never was in too great a hurry

¹⁷ John 4. 4-43.

¹⁸ Mark 5. 22-34.

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to answer any appeal for mercy and healing and help.¹⁹

He stood consciously before the final great crisis of his life. He knew that the betrayal and the cross lay just before him; but he deliberately shut the door on the morrow and all its dread doom and in the upper room with his disciples he devoted himself to their comfort and assurance. He asked them to share in his joy. He promised to bequeath them his peace.²⁰ Was there ever a better illustration of his own teaching of freedom from anxiety and deliverance from distraction and worry and care? He was anxious for nothing. He was casting all his cares upon God.

8. *Paul*. What did Paul say? "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."²¹ The life of a believer can be a life without care, because his life can be a life of ceaseless prayer. It was Bengel who said, "Care and prayer are as incompatible with each other as water and fire." Paul suggests that we are to worry about nothing, because we can pray for everything we need and we can have the

¹⁹ Luke 18. 35-43.

²⁰ John 14. 17.

²¹ Phil. 4. 6.

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promise of God's sufficient grace for every emergency. What can worry do for a man? Nothing. What can God do for a man? Everything. Then, be anxious about *nothing*, but in *everything* let your requests be made known unto God.

9. *Peter*. Jesus told us not to be anxious. Paul told us not to worry. Peter gives us the reason why we can obey and why we ought to obey these commands. He writes in his Epistle that we can cast all our care upon God the Father, in the confident knowledge that he careth for us and that he will take care of us to the very end. Peter uses the same word in this passage²² which Jesus used in the Sermon on the Mount and Paul used in the Epistle to the Philippians. The cares which we are to cast upon God are those things which distract and distress and harass the soul, the anxieties and worryings and frettings which are inconsistent with calm confidence in the Father's care, those things which tend to dissipate the soul's devotion and threaten it with extinction in death. We are to live above all these things. We are to be free from them, because God careth for us and we can leave all our worries with him.

10. *Psalmist*. It is probable that Peter's

²² 1 Pet. 5. 7.

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phrase came from the psalm which says, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and he shall sustain thee."²³ There is a promise, with a baggage car in front and a Pullman palace car accompanying. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord," there is the baggage car. "And he shall sustain thee," there is the Pullman car provided to carry me as well as my baggage.

There are two classes of travelers on the railroad. We have been able to distinguish them without much difficulty every time we have taken a railroad ride of any considerable length. There is the old maid who comes into the car, covered all over and all around with a pile of budgets and bundles and packages. She turns one seat over and takes possession of two seats and piles both seats full of her belongings. There are three small valises and five packages done up in paper and the tin box with her lunch and the bandbox with her best hat and the cage with her parrot, and there are her umbrella and her wallet and her shawl. She sits on the very end and the very edge of her seat all the time, so as to be able to jump and run in case of accident, and she keeps a sharp eye on all her possessions, for she is afraid that somebody will steal one of them or something will slip off on the floor or

²³ Psa. 55. 22.

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something awful will happen. She worries and frets all the ride through and at the end of it she is in a perfect stew of excitement until everything gets safely off again.

Then there is the woman more experienced in travel who puts all her baggage into a trunk and gets a check for it and comes into the parlor car with nothing in her hands but a bunch of fresh flowers and a fan. She seats herself comfortably and converses pleasantly or reads or enjoys the scenery, and never once thinks of her baggage until she gets off at the end of her journey and presents her check and finds it all right. That is the better way to travel, and the psalmist says, and Peter supports him in the saying, that we can travel that way in our spiritual life.

Cast thy burden upon the Lord; he is the General Manager of the line. Put it in the baggage car; he will be responsible for it. Cast thy burden on the Lord and he will sustain thee; there is the parlor car provided for your personal accommodation. Step in with a bunch of flowers and a fan. Look out at the fowls of the air and the flowers of the field, and be as care-free as they. There will be no strike along the line. There is no danger of an accident. The roadbed is solid and perfectly safe. The ransomed of the Lord

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shall ride there, and all sorrow and sighing and worrying and fretting and anxious care shall flee away. The children of the heavenly Father will be above such things.

They will not be full of care about anything, because the Father has cared for everything. They will not be full of care about anything, because they have cast all their care upon him. They will not be anxious and worried about anything, because in everything that is good and pleasant and proper they need only to let their requests be made known unto God and have them satisfied. That seems to be what the psalmist and Peter and Paul and Jesus meant by their sayings. We can cast every distracting and debilitating burden upon the Lord. We can cast every anxious care upon him. Then our life can run on in endless song above earth's lamentation, like a safe and pleasant ride over the Rockies and over the Sierras even to the Golden Gate.

11. *God's Care.* It was a prevalent belief among the heathen that the deities were indifferent to human affairs. In his *Annals* Tacitus says, "It is uncertain whether human affairs are governed by fate and immutable necessity, or by chance," and he goes on to say that "the wisest of the ancients and their followers were of different sentiments, and

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many had this opinion fixed in their minds, that neither our beginning, nor our end, nor men at all, are minded by the gods.”²⁴ Pliny declared that it would be “ridiculous to imagine that the God who is supreme takes any care of human affairs,” and he gave it as his opinion that “without doubt the Divinity would be polluted with such a sad and troublesome ministry or employment.”²⁵

Jesus did not talk that way about the Father in heaven. His gospel was in direct antithesis to such teaching. On the contrary, he said that the Father took care of the birds and the flowers and that we were of much more value than they. They are his creatures, but we are his children. If we have the faith in his Fatherly providence which Jesus had we will behold the birds and consider the lilies and learn from them not to worry about meat and raiment and material things.

Job had made the same appeal to these beast and bird and fish preachers of God's providence when he said, “Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who

²⁴ Tacitus, *Annals*, VIII.

²⁵ Pliny, *Hist. Nat.*, Lib. II, cap. 7.

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knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind? Doth not the ear try words? and the mouth taste his meat?"²⁶ The psalmist had said that the young lions called to him in their hunger and he gave them meat, and the ravens sought from him their daily food.²⁷

In the Talmud we find the same argument from the lesser to the greater which Jesus adopts in this Sermon. Rabbi Simeon said, "Never have I seen a gazelle spreading out figs to dry, or a lion carrying a burden, or a fox that had a workshop. Yet they are nourished without anxiety or trouble. They were created only to serve me; but I was created to serve my Creator. If, then, these creatures which were created only to serve me receive their proper nourishment without anxiety or trouble, should I not, with much greater reason, expect to receive my daily bread without anxious care or hard toil, since I have been created to serve my Creator?" There is man's supreme duty, the service of the Creator. Jesus expresses it in the command, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

²⁶ Job. 12. 7-11.

²⁷ Psa. 104. 21; 147. 9.

CHAPTER XV

THE DISCIPLES' JUDGMENT

1. *Three great laws.* There are three great laws of the Kingdom laid down in this Sermon. The first was the climax of the section concerning the law, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."¹ The second is the climax of this section dealing with personal motive and experience, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."² Jesus had spoken of the righteousness of the Pharisees which was ceremonial and insufficient. He had mentioned the righteousness of his disciples which was to exceed that of the Pharisees and was to be in secret as well as in public. Now he introduces the righteousness of God as the only sufficient righteousness and the one to be aimed at and reproduced in the lives of his followers until they were perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect. The sixth chapter in our text climaxes just as the fifth chapter did in the demand of divine perfection and righteousness from men.

¹ Matt. 5. 48.

² Matt. 6. 33.

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The third great law of the Sermon tells us how obedience to the two preceding laws will eventuate in our relations to others, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."³ The perfection of the Father aimed at and attained, the righteousness of God sought for and obtained, the Golden Rule practiced in all human relations; these are the three great principles of life and conduct laid down in the Sermon, the three great laws of the new kingdom which was to regenerate the earth. The children of this world may love those who love them and requite good only for good. The children of this world may do their righteous deeds only to be seen of men and to have praise from them. The children of this world may seek after meat and drink and be anxious and worried about what they shall wear. The children of the Father will be perfect in love to all alike, loving God with all their hearts and their neighbors as themselves. They will practice the Golden Rule and manifest the righteousness of God and worry about nothing in heaven or earth. They will not be anxious concerning the morrow: for the morrow will take thought for the things of itself. Their motto will be that of the current Jew-

³ Matt. 7. 12.

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ish proverb, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

2. *Hyperbolic?* There are those who read this section and say, "Of course these commands are not to be taken literally. Of course they are hyperbolic and extravagant. If we did not sow and reap and gather into barns, we never would have any food supply on hand. If we did not toil and spin, but attempted to grow like the lilies, we would soon be going about naked and ashamed. It is all right to seek after the kingdom of God and his righteousness, but first of all we must see to it that we have the necessities of life, clothing and food and drink; and at the present prices for such things it will make any man worry to get them. It is not possible to live without anxiety in this world, and we never saw anybody yet who did not worry about something. We always did think that there were many things in this Sermon which never were intended to be put into practice and now we are sure of it, after reading this section."

Most of this, as we have seen, altogether misses the point. Jesus is not talking about industry and thrift and prudent foresight. All these things he is taking for granted. He says simply this: "Having done your best,

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leave to God the rest." It may be that you will not be always clothed and fed. Even poverty is compatible with peace of mind and great beatitude of spirit. God will send his sun and rain upon all alike; and, if he sends the sun alone for three years and six months and a famine comes upon the land, you will feel it with the rest. If he sends the rain alone for weeks on weeks and your fields are flooded and your crops destroyed, you will suffer as well as others. Your Christian character will be no guarantee of exceptional physical providence or extraordinary material prosperity.

The difference between you and other people will be that you will suffer in disaster and rejoice in the sunshine as the birds and the flowers do, in perfect resignation and perfect confidence that the Father's will is only for your good. The difference will be in your mental and spiritual attitude. "Cast your burden upon him and he will sustain you. Be not anxious about anything, but in everything, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. Trust him even as do the birds and the flowers. He provides for them and you are of much more value to him than they are. Therefore live without fretting and worry, as the children of the heavenly Father ought to live."

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There are those who will read this section of the Sermon and say: "Jesus commands it. I will pray earnestly unto God, that in his power and grace he will lift me above all foolish fretting and all useless worry into the perfect peace of those whose minds are stayed on him." If the church from the beginning had sought diligently to know the mind of Jesus in all these things and then in all meekness and poverty of spirit and purity of intent had labored diligently to realize it, would it not have found the kingdom of God and his righteousness long ago, and would not all these other things have been added unto it in full measure:

"To love our God with all our strength and will;

To covet nothing; to devise no ill

Against our neighbors; to procure or do

Nothing to others which we would not to

Our very selves; not to avenge our wrong;

To be content with little; not to long

For wealth and greatness; to despise or jeer

No man, and, if we be despised, to bear;

To feed the hungry; to hold fast our crown;

To take from others nought; to give our
own,—

These are his precepts, and, alas, in these
What is so hard but faith can do with ease?"⁴

⁴ Henry Vaughan.

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3. *Uncharitable Judgment.* The life of the disciple is to be without corroding care and disabling anxiety and foolish fretting and useless worry. There is another thing that it is to be without, and that is uncharitable judgment, unwarranted criticism, hypocritical fault-finding. Jesus went on to say, "*Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*" 7. 1-5.

It is hypocritical judgment which Jesus is condemning here. That is so clearly apparent that one wonders how it is possible for anyone to misunderstand him. All judging is not forbidden. Moral judgments are necessary. Jesus goes right on to say, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs. Cast not your pearls before swine. Beware of false prophets. There are ravening wolves against whom you must guard. There are thorns and

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there are thistles which you are to judge by their fruits." Jesus was not contradicting himself in saying these things. He was not stultifying his own advice. He was not such a fool as some of his captious critics would make him appear. We speak of a man "of good judgment"; and Jesus says that a man of good judgment will be discerning and discriminating, and that is obviously true. Most of the interpreters of the Sermon on the Mount seem unwilling, however, to credit Jesus with the utterance of literal and commonsense truth.

They say, "How can you decide who are dogs and who are swine and who are false prophets without judging them? Yet Jesus tells us that we must not judge at all. It is one of his startling statements, intended to set forth a truth so extravagantly that it will make an impression, but not to be taken literally at all." The very best way to make a truth unimpressive is to state it so extravagantly that it seems unreasonable and therefore not to be heeded in practical life. It is in that way that this Sermon has been interpreted for the most part. Either explicitly or implicitly, either consciously or unconsciously, many of these sayings of Jesus have been regarded as metaphorical, hyperbolic,

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fanatical, and therefore unpractical; to be admired for their boldness, their startling and paradoxical challenge to faith, but after all, not to be considered seriously in shaping either individual or national life.

Jesus was no fanatic. There was no flicker of insanity in his eye, no fire of unbalanced enthusiasm in his manner or speech. He was as quiet as the morning dawn. His tones were as even as the placid surface of the slumbering sea at the mountain's foot. He was not startling anybody with mental fireworks. He was laying down some fundamental principles in the kingdom of heaven on earth. One of these was that it was to be without hypocrisy in the judgment of others. Moral judgment would be necessary. The saints were to judge the world, but their judgment would be a righteous judgment, not a hypocritical one.

Jesus faced another multitude on another day in his ministry, an angry and critical multitude, and he said to them, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."⁵ Is there any contradiction between this command to judge righteous judgment and the command not to judge hypocritical judgment? Of course not. Jesus himself distinguishes in this sentence between

⁵ John 7. 24.

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judgment according to appearance and judgment according to righteousness. On another occasion he challenged a whole congregation, "Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?"⁶ He thought they ought to do that. It was their duty and their right.

4. *Hypocritical Judgment.* There are two kinds of judgment. The one he commands, the other he forbids. It is bad enough to be a hypocrite, but to be a critical hypocrite is worse; and it is hypocritical judgment of which Jesus is speaking here. How Paul lashes away at the Jew who judges the Gentile for doing certain things which he himself does! "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. . . . Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law dishonorest thou God?"⁷ The best way to be sure of righteous judgment is to begin by being righteous oneself.

⁶ Luke 12. 57.

⁷ Rom. 2. 1, 21-23.

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(1) *Mote and beam.* The hypocrite with a beam in his own eye is in no condition to remove the mote out of the eye of anyone else. It is dangerous for the blind to lead the blind. It is almost equally dangerous to have a half-blind oculist. Jesus must have smiled as he used this figure of speech. In the haymow in the old barn the heavy receiving beam was covered deep under the dust of the years and as the sunlight came in through the cracks one could see the motes rising from that beam and floating about in the still air. There are all the elements of the Master's picture. The mote is that tiny particle of dust invisible except in the sunlight and floating about in the unstirred air.⁸ The beam is that receiving beam which carries the weight of the whole structure.⁹ The utter absurdity of the man whose fault was as that heavy beam of timber complaining about the comparatively atomic delinquency of his brother must have appealed to the sense of the ridiculous in both Jesus and his hearers.

(2) *Parallels.* They may all have been accustomed to it as a current form of expression. In the Talmud we find that Rabbi Tarphon, who was a contemporary of Jesus,

⁸ τὸ κάρφος from καρφεῖν, to raise a dust.

⁹ ἡ δοκὸς from δέχομαι, to receive.

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once said, "I wonder if there be any in this age that will receive reproof. But if one saith to another, Cast out the mote out of thine eye, he will be ready to answer, Cast out the beam out of thine eye." In another passage in the Talmud we read, "It is written that in the days when they judged the Judges themselves, when one said to another, Cast out the mote out of thine eye, the other answered him, Cast out the beam out of thine eye."

Wetstein quotes a similar sentiment from Horace, "He who requires that his friend should not take offense at his own protuberances, will excuse his friend's little warts." Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones. The next thing to expect is that the stones will be thrown back again. Criticisms are like chickens; they always come home to roost. The hypocrite who measures out judgment to all of his neighbors will have the same judgment measured out to himself.

When a man says, "All men are unchaste," everybody knows that he himself is impure. When he says, "All men have their price," everybody knows that he himself will either bribe or be bribed. Haman builds the scaffold upon which he himself is hung. It is homely wisdom, expressed in the common rabbinical proverbial form, "In what measure a man

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measureth, others measure to him." Seneca put it into classical form, "Each one suffers for what he does; crime returns to its author; the guilty is punished after his own example." The judge is measured by the standard of his own judgment. All hypocritical and uncharitable judgment is sure to return on the judge's own head.

5. *Good Judgment.* (1) *In evangelism.*—The disciple of Jesus will be no hypocrite, but he will be a man of good judgment. He will be discriminating in his public teaching and his private conversation. He will not spread his treasures before those who have no appreciation of them. He will not waste his time upon unreceptive souls. Jesus put this suggestion into proverbial form in the words, "*Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before the swine, lest haply they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you,*" 7. 6. Aristotle may have had something of the same thought in mind when he said, "Do not let your wisdom fall on the public highway." Jesus gave the practical application of this teaching later when he sent out the twelve upon their first mission with the direction, "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of

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your feet. . . . When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another."¹⁰

It would have been sacrilege to give the sacrificial meat to the dogs of the street. That meat was holy, as having been consecrated to God. So there are truths too sacred to be exposed to the sneer of the cynic. The wise man does not wear his heart on his sleeve for daws to peck at. The dogs have no sense of the sacred. The swine have no appreciation for pearls. They trample them under their feet. There are people who are like the dogs and the swine. Jesus did not hesitate to call men goats and wolves and snakes and foxes and dogs and swine, when their conduct proved that they deserved such names. He asked his disciples to judge them justly and then to treat them accordingly.

Jesus the son of Sirach had said, "Talk not much with a fool, and consort not with a pig; beware of him, lest thou have trouble, and thou art defiled when he shaketh himself."¹¹ Jesus the son of Mary called men "fools and blind" and consorted not with them, but rather with those who had some appreciation of spiritual truths. There are always Marys who have receptive souls, to whom the

¹⁰ Matt. 10. 14, 23.

¹¹ Eccclus. 22. 13 (Hebrew text).

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pearls may be given. Let the swine have their swill. There always will be a Lydia whose heart the Lord will open to hear the things spoken by his messenger. Let the dogs be the scavengers on the city streets. We will go out to the riverside and the place of prayer to find the one worthy to hear of the holy things. Pearls are the reward of personal devotion. That which is holy is given in answer to persistent prayer.

(2) *In faith.* Jesus goes on to speak of what the Father will give his children, if they only ask in faith. *"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"* 7. 7-11.

As Jesus sat there on the mountain height both he and his hearers could see on every side of them the round stones lying brown and bare, in their general appearance much resembling the loaves of the land in that day.

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The lizards and an occasional serpent glided in and out of the rock crevices, and down on the Sea of Galilee there were the fishermen's boats. The environment may have suggested the form of the illustrations Jesus used. "If your son desires bread, how does he get it? He asks you for it, but you have no bread in your pockets; and nevertheless you give it to him. How do you do it? You give him a coin and tell him to go to the baker-shop for it. If he does not know where the baker-shop is, you give him the directions, and he seeks for it until he finds it. Having come to the door he knocks and is admitted and receives all the bread that he needs.

"So it is with you and the heavenly Father. If you ask any good thing from him, it shall be given you. He may give you the directions and you may have to seek it and find it. You may have to knock at the door before it is opened to you; but no good thing will he withhold from you, and if you ask and seek and knock, the door to all his treasure house will be opened to you. Sometimes your little children ask you for things which are not good for them and then you do not give them what they ask. This morning I saw a little one stretching out his hands toward one of these brown stones, crying for it because he thought

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it was bread; but his father knew better than to give it to him, although he wailed for it lustily. He would not give him a stone for bread nor a serpent for fish. The wise father will not give the child all the things for which he asks, but only those things which are for his good. So the heavenly Father will give only good things to his children. If they ask for bread, he gives it to them. If they ask for stones, he still gives them bread.

“He always answers their prayers, but sometimes he answers them ‘Yes’ and sometimes he answers them ‘No.’ Sometimes he gives pearls when they ask for mere provender. Sometimes he gives holy things when they are asking for hurtful things. He always gives good things, the things which are best for them; and if they are continually asking and seeking and knocking they will be continually receiving and finding and entering in at the open door of the treasury house of his goodness and grace. Your little child may not relish the refusal of its request in the form in which it is made, but you know that it is right to refuse it. You know that if the parts were reversed, you would expect the superior wisdom of the parent to refuse you, the child, anything which would harm you and to do for you always that which would be for your

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greatest good. The case is reversed between you and your heavenly Father. Trust him always to give you the best of good gifts."

(3) *In conduct.* Then Jesus extends the thought of the relation between parent and child and between men and God to the thought of the relationship with all men, "*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets,*" 7. 12. It is the climax of the Sermon. Luther said, "With these words Christ concludes the instruction contained in these three chapters, and gathers them all into one little bundle." It is the summary of all he has said. It is the key to the interpretation of those startling paradoxes, as some have called them, in the fifth chapter, about turning the other cheek and parting with the cloak and going the second mile and giving to all who ask. Luke parallels that paragraph in his Sermon on the Plain and then with true insight immediately adds, "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."¹²

Jesus says here that this Golden Rule is the climax and the summation of the law and the prophets. It represents their spirit. It is the fruition of their tendency. We do not

¹² Luke 6, 29-31.

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find these exact words upon the lips of any lawgiver or any prophet of the Old Testament, but we cannot read the book through without seeing that this was its aim and that this is its outcome. Paul said, "If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."¹³

Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."¹⁴

We know how Paul has pictured this love in the Epistle to the Corinthians. It is long-suffering and kind, unenvious, unconceited, unselfish, never unseemly nor unbalanced, thinking the best about everybody, and when it can no longer think the best still hoping, and when it can no longer hope still suffering patiently, bearing all things, enduring all things, turning the other cheek, going the second mile, doing unto others as it would

¹³ Rom. 13. 9, 10.

¹⁴ Matt. 22. 37-40.

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have others do unto it. We know what this love is in actual life, for we have seen it incarnate in Jesus. The Golden Rule makes love the guiding principle of the life. It demands only what love demands.

Would we be judged with uncharitable judgment? If not, let us judge charitably; let all our judgments be the judgments of love. Would we have other men give us that for which we had no appreciation? Then let us be discriminating in our teaching and conversation. Would we have other men give us stones instead of bread and serpents instead of fish? Then let us see to it that we give nothing but good gifts to our fellows, even though they ask us for something which will harm them. Put yourself in the other man's place. How would you like him to act toward you? Act in that way toward him. Would you have anybody exploit or cheat you? Then never exploit or cheat anyone else. When this rule becomes regnant in human society we will have a world without selfishness, a world in which all are for each and each for all, a world in which men seek for the kingdom of God and his righteousness first of all, and a world in which they thus will become perfect even as the Father in heaven is perfect.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CLIMAX OF THE SERMON

1. *Three great principles.* These are the three great principles laid down in the Sermon: first, be perfect in love, and second, seek first the Kingdom, and third, practice the Golden Rule. Each of these is implied in the others. They are three formulations of the same root idea. All that Jesus has set forth in the Sermon is to be interpreted in harmony with these three sayings. Any interpretation inconsistent with them is to be recognized at once as false to the underlying thought of the discourse. Can a man with the experience of perfect love go out with the express purpose of killing his neighbor? There are those who think it can be done under certain circumstances, but the unclouded and unprejudiced conscience of the world will be suspicious of their reasoning and uncertain as to their conclusions.

Can a man who is seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness lend himself to any movement which is frankly selfish or merely nationalistic and which renders inter-

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national brotherhood impossible and retards the work of the Kingdom around the earth? There are those who think that standing up for their rights is the first and greatest duty of man and that the cause of the Kingdom can be served best by making their views triumphant and their nation victorious and their allies safe, but the calm judgment of the various races of men will not acquit them of narrowness and selfishness and is likely to weigh them in the balances and find them wanting in love. Can a man maim and kill and burn and destroy, and still do unto his brother as he would have his brother do unto him? Can anyone by any mental juggling or conscience twisting convince himself that it is possible? Some seem to have succeeded in doing it. Some preachers have advocated militarism in the face of the Sermon on the Mount; but the future will discount both their judgment and their piety.

The Golden Rule is not applicable to war and the inevitable atrocities of war. The laws of the Kingdom are not the laws laid down in the military order books. Perfect love is not the principle on which battles are waged. The spirit of the Sermon on the Mount and the spirit of modern warfare with its poison gas and its hunger blockades and its multi-

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plied millions of murders are absolutely incompatible with each other. The church must choose between the two. It cannot serve both the Prince of peace and the God of war. If the church repudiates the Sermon on the Mount and prefers to curry favor with the powers that be, even at the cost of sanctioning a fratricidal war, the individual disciple still can be true to his Lord. He will have the beatitudes for his reward with all the persecutions promised along with them.

He will be in the minority at present. He will enter a narrow gate and have few companions in his pilgrim way, but he and they can have the consolation that they are in the way of life and are heading toward more abundant life all the time. The crowds will be in the broader way, entered by the wider gate, wide enough to admit the church and the world side by side, cheek by jowl, and leading down to the destruction of civilization in a world war. There are the two ways, the way of the militarist and the way of the pacifist, the broad way and the narrow way; and we must choose between them.

There are two classes of prophets, the false prophets who clothe themselves in the garments of the gospel and inwardly are ravening wolves, claiming to be sheep but preach-

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ing the doctrine of retaliation and rapine with tooth and claw, and the prophets like Jesus who preach only such doctrines as these of the Sermon on the Mount. By their fruits we know them. If their preaching results in planting the thorns of hatred and ill will and the thistles of suspicion and distrust among brethren and among the nations, then we know that it is of the devil and not of God. If their preaching results in a peace in which every man sits under his own vine and figtree in mutual fellowship and equal prosperity with all of his fellows, we know that it embodies the Golden Rule and the laws of the Kingdom and the spirit of perfect love.

The corrupt fruit of the charnel house, filled with its myriads upon myriads of dead, of nations bankrupt and staggering under unbearable burdens of taxation and reparation, of debased morals and demoralized ideals around the world, bears witness to its origin in the counsels of hell. The good fruit of peace upon earth and good will among men will establish the fact that the teachings of Jesus are the embodiment of highest wisdom as well as of greatest love. The militarists will come up in the last day and say, "Lord, Lord, did we not call ourselves by thy name? Did we not conquer the Huns? Did we not

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make the world safe for—the Allies?" In my judgment the Master will say, "How did you do it? by working iniquity, by rapine and bloodshed? Depart from me; I never knew you. Not everyone that saith, Lord, Lord, is a member of my Kingdom; but only those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven. If you would know what that will is, read the Sermon on the Mount; and until you can square all your preaching and your practice by that Sermon you need not claim any affinity with me."

There are two houses. One of them was built on the shifting sands of modern secret diplomacy and of military preparedness and of national aggression and exclusiveness, and the rains descended and the floods came and the winds of the world war blew and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it. There is another house, a house of prayer for all the nations, the temple of the universal brotherhood, founded on the rock of the Golden Rule, and destined to stand through all world catastrophes and all time to come. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. It shall be for those who do the will of the Father in heaven and who do not work iniquity. We have our choice. Which way will we go? Which prophet will

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we heed? Which house will we prefer? Will we follow the Golden Rule or the rule of gold? The Golden Rule of Jesus will lead us to the golden age of man.

The Golden Rule finishes the Sermon proper. It is followed by the paragraphs concerning the two ways and the two prophets and the two foundations. The threefold contrast serves as a concluding exhortation, impressing the truth and pressing the necessity for decision concerning the truth set forth in the Sermon. The Golden Rule does not claim to be original. Jesus says that it is the summation of the law and the prophets. It is the interpretation of the law in Leviticus, "Love thy neighbor as thyself."¹ It is a question whether it adds anything to this law.

2. *Parallels.* In the Talmud there is the story of the man who went to Shammai and asked the great rabbi to teach him the whole law in a brief form, while he stood on one foot. He was a Gentile, and Shammai may have thought that he was not in earnest and needed to be punished for a jest in bad taste. The story goes that he beat the Gentile with the staff which was in his hand, and so drove the questioner away. Nothing daunted, the Gentile went to Hillel and proffered the same

¹ Lev. 19. 18.

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request, and Hillel made him a proselyte and answered his request by saying, "That which is odious to thyself, do it not to thy neighbor: for this is the whole law, all the rest is only comment upon it." Hillel lived a generation earlier than Jesus and if this story was current about him in that day, as in all probability it was, Jesus may have had this tradition in mind as he formulated the Golden Rule and then declared that it was the law and the prophets.

The negative putting of the principle adopted by Hillel first appeared in Jewish literature in the book of Tobit, "What thou hatest, do to no man."² It is sometimes said that Jesus puts the principle positively and that everywhere else in the world's literature it occurs only in the negative form; but this is not quite true. The precept in Leviticus is positive enough. Seneca said, "The question remains, In what manner should a boon be given? On this point I think I shall show the readiest way: If we give as we would wish to receive."³ There is the positive principle, applied to the giving and receiving of benefits. Some centuries earlier than Seneca or Jesus someone asked Aristotle how we should act

² Tobit 4. 15.¹

³ Seneca, *De Benef.* II, 1.

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to our friends and he answered, "As we should desire them to behave to us."⁴ Here is the principle of the Golden Rule, but limited to our conduct toward friends.

Isocrates had put the same principle negatively centuries before our Gospels were written, when he said, "Whatever things would make you angry, if you suffered them from others, these things do not do to others." Confucius commanded, "Do not to others what you would not wish done to yourself."⁵ *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* says, "This is the way of life: first, thou shalt love the God who made thee; secondly, thy neighbor as thyself: and all things whatsoever thou wouldest not should happen to thee, do not thou to another."⁶ Of course the positive form is stronger than the negative. The one may go no further than selfish prudence would dictate, but the other commands the aggressive service of love. Both positive and negative parallels can be found in the *Sayings of the Jewish Fathers*. "Let the property of thy neighbor be as dear to thee as thine own." "Let thy neighbor's honor be as dear to thee as thine own." "Just as a man sees to his

⁴ Diog. Laert. V, 1. sec. 21.

⁵ Legge, *Chinese Classics*, I, 191f.

⁶ Didache, I, 2-4.

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own honor and reputation, so let him see to his neighbor's, and just as he does not like an evil report to be spread concerning his own character, so let him desire not to spread an evil report concerning his neighbor." "Just as a man looks upon his own home so let him look upon the home of his neighbor."

3. *The Two Ways.* The Golden Rule has many parallels in both Jewish and classical literature and in both negative and positive forms. The same thing is true of the first of the three contrasts which follow, that of the Two Ways. In Jeremiah we find the passage, "Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death."⁷ In the post-canonical book of Esdras there is the mention of a city full of all manner of good things, entered by a single strait gate, reached by a narrow causeway with a raging fire on the right hand and storm-swept water on the left. In the Apocalypse of Baruch we read of "the way of the fire, the path which leads to Gehenna."⁸ In the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs the statement is made, "Two ways hath God given to the sons of men and two inclinations."⁹ Philo has a para-

⁷ Jer. 21. 8.

⁸ Apoc. of Baruch, LXXXV, 13.

⁹ Test. Asher, I. 3.

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graph on the Two Ways. "The path of pleasure is well frequented by men. . . . The paths of prudence, and temperance, and the other virtues, even though they may not be utterly untraveled, are, at all events, not beaten much, for the number of those who proceed by those roads, and who form associations with virtue alone, disregarding, once for all, all other allurements, is very small." Jesus may have read and remembered all of these sayings.

He may have looked away across the valley again to the city of Safed perched on its height and have noticed the stream of traffic pouring in and out of its broad gate by its easy way of approach and the very few who took some steeper and narrower way to a smaller and straiter gate somewhere in the wall and have made these the symbols of the way of life and the way of death. He said, "*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it,*" 7. 13, 14.

In the well-known allegory in the Tablet of Cebes, the disciple of Socrates, there is the same figure. "Seest thou not a certain small

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door, and a pathway before the door, in no way crowded; but few, very few, go in there-at? This is the way that leads to true discipline."¹⁰ The Two Ways seems to have made a deep impression upon both Christian and classical literature. It is found in *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*,¹¹ the Epistle of Barnabas,¹² and the Shepherd of Hermas.¹³ It is in the *Secrets of Enoch*¹⁴ and the *Sibylline Oracles*,¹⁵ and also in *Lucian*.¹⁶ The use of this allegory in the Sermon on the Mount doubtless influenced some of these, but not all. Probably the figure was proverbial and simply appropriated by Jesus as applicable at this point.

A West-African Negro chose to be a Mohammedan rather than a Christian and when asked for his reason he said, "Mohammedanism is a noble, broad path; there is room for a man and his sins. The way of Christ is a narrow way; the sins have to be left behind." That strikes at the root of the matter. Life lies at the end of sacrifice. Self-indulgence leads to death. Sinners and compromisers go with the multitude to do evil. Saints are for the most part left to walk alone. John Wes-

¹⁰ Cebes. Tab. c. 12.

¹¹ Didache 1. 1.

¹² Ep. Barn., 18.

¹³ Mand., VI. 1.

¹⁴ Secrets of Enoch, XXX. 15.

¹⁵ Sib. Orac., VIII. 399.

¹⁶ *Rhetorum Praeceptor*, 7, 8.

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ley said, "You must be singular or be damned! The way to hell has nothing singular in it; but the way to heaven is singularity all over: if you move but one step toward God, you are not as other men are. But regard not this. It is far better to stand alone than to fall into the pit."¹⁷

There are plenty of false prophets to say that half a loaf is better than none, and that if righteousness only will fellowship with unrighteousness all society may get sanctified in spots, and that if light only will commune with darkness sometime or other the darkness may break into dawn, and that if Christ only will have some concord with Belial there may be some hope that Belial sometime or other can get converted, and that if believers only will yoke up with unbelievers the car of progress may not progress backward so rapidly, and that if the temple of God only will fall into line of agreement with the idols of militarism and imperialism the world can be made safe for liberty of speech and assembly and one last great war may put an end to war forever.

Over against all this gospel of the wide gate and the broad way stands the command of the Most High God, "Come out from among

¹⁷ Wesley, *Works*, vol. i, p. 291.

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them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."¹⁸ In the face of that command Paul says, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."¹⁹ Those who do that will find themselves in a narrow way with few companions, but they will have fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, and in that fellowship they will find fullness of joy.

The whole close of this Sermon is filled with contrasts, and the contrasts are such as to suggest that there is no possibility of compromise between them. Our way cannot be both broad and narrow at the same time. We cannot head toward destruction and life at the same moment. Wolves and sheep can have nothing in common. Thorns and grapes will not grow on the same branch. Thistles and figs cannot spring from the same stalk. Evil and good are opposite and antagonistic and utterly inconsistent with each other. Saying is one thing and doing is quite another thing.

¹⁸ 2 Cor. 6. 17, 18.

¹⁹ 2 Cor. 7. 1.

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The wise man and the foolish man differ in conduct and have radically different experience. Sand and rock will not furnish the same foundation. A house cannot be permanent and perishable in the same storm. We are to choose between these things. We are not to try to combine them in any way.

4. *The Two Prophets.* The next paragraph, concerning the false prophets, may have been suggested by the preaching of John the Baptist. John had exhorted the people to "bring forth therefore fruit meet for repentance,"²⁰ and he had said, "Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire."²¹ So Jesus now says, "*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them,*" 7. 15-20.

²⁰ Matt. 3. 8.

²¹ Matt. 3. 10.

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Not by their roots, for some corrupt growths are so firmly and deeply rooted that it is better to hew down the tree and cast it into the fire than to try to uproot it. Not by their trunks, for some of the most massive trunks belong to most deadly species. Not by their branches, for the tree with the most wide-spreading branches sometimes only is the greater cumberer of the ground. Not by the leaves, for sometimes there is a fair show of leaves when there is no fruit, as in the case of the figtree which was withered. Not by the blossoms, for blossoms are only promises which may be caught by a late frost and fail to mature. There is only one safe standard of judgment and that is good fruit. A corrupt tree may keep up appearances as far as its root and its trunk and its branches and its blossoms and its leaves are concerned, but when it comes to yielding fruit its true character is manifest at last. A rotting tree cannot yield any fruit and a corrupt tree can yield only corrupt fruit.

Lange says that the false prophets resemble thorns from their fanciful and harsh traditionalism, and thistles from their proselytizing spirit, which takes hold of and clings to every part of your person and dress. This suggestion itself may be fanciful and harsh.

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All that Jesus says is that the false prophet may be likened to a tree fit for firewood but not for fruit. Yet he suggests that these folks will claim to have borne some wonderful fruit. They have prophesied in the name of the Lord and they have won the applause of the world and the flesh and the devil, for in the Lord's name they have given their blessing to the workers of iniquity. They have tortured the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount out of all recognition of its face meaning and its real import, and they have been very highly esteemed for doing it. They have maintained very pleasant relations with the capitalists and the militarists. They have defended the present state of affairs and they have applauded the righteous motives of any and every war. They have found some religious formula with which to justify anything which the world considered good. They have done their level best to ally the church with the world and the world with the church.

They have been very popular preachers. They have attracted great crowds to their sermons. There has been much interest in their utterances. They have had some headlines in the papers. They have ridden on the top of the wave of popular enthusiasm and they have mistaken the approbation of men

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for the approval of God. They have cast out some devils. They have headed great reform movements. They have been abolitionists and prohibitionists and progressives in politics and they have talked against dancing and theatergoing and horseracing and gambling and they have waxed righteously indignant over the sins of society and they have seen seasons of spasmodic housecleaning in civic and social affairs.

They never have preached holiness, for that was not popular. They never have asked people to be sinless, for that would be going too far. They have winked at some things. They have compromised on some points. Along with everybody else they have been workers of iniquity in some particulars. What else could you expect? You surely would not expect men in their environment to be perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect. You surely would not think it possible for them to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness all the time and in everything. You surely would know better than to obliterate all social distinctions and all color lines and do to every man just what you would want him to do to you if your positions were reversed.

That may do well enough in some future age

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of evolution, but at present it is too chimerical even to consider. They say, "Lord, Lord," but they are not ready to go as far as Jesus goes in the Sermon on the Mount. The time has not come yet for putting all the principles of Jesus into practice. At present we go just as far as we find it convenient and then wait until the crowd catches up with us and is prepared to go a step farther. That is the only sensible procedure. Keep with the crowd and keep in with the crowd. Wear sheep's clothing and make everybody believe that it is all wool through and through, but when any time of war and bloodshed comes raven away with the wolves.

John Wesley says that the false prophets are "all those, of whatever denomination, who encourage the proud, the trifler, the passionate, the lover of the world, the man of pleasure, the unjust and the unkind, the easy, careless, harmless, useless creature, the man who suffers no reproach for righteousness' sake, to imagine he is in the way to heaven. These are false prophets in the highest sense of the word. These are traitors both to God and man. These are no other than the first-born of Satan; the eldest sons of Apollyon, the destroyer. These are far above the rank of ordinary cut-throats; for they murder the

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souls of men. They are continually peopling the realms of night; and whenever they follow the poor souls they have destroyed, 'Hell shall be moved from beneath, to meet them at their coming!' ”²²

Jesus said, “*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity,*” 7. 21-23.

It is astonishing to what an extent men can deceive themselves as to their true character. Samuel Johnson was notorious for his boorishness. Yet he is reported to have said: “I consider myself a very polite man. I am well bred to a degree of needless scrupulosity. No man is so cautious not to interrupt another. No man thinks it so necessary to appear attentive when others are speaking.” The fact of the case was that he would not have recognized Politeness if he had met her in the middle of the street, and she could have passed him by, saying, “I never knew you.”

²² Wesley, *Works*, vol. i, p. 294.

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Frederick the Great was a great warrior, but he thought he was a great poet and he was very angry with Voltaire when Voltaire gave him to understand that his poetry was rubbish and that the Muse of Poetry would pass him by with a stony stare, saying, "I never knew you."

Many an evangelist, full of self-conceit because of his popularity fostered by sedulous advertising and consummate organization and deceived by the fact that multitudes under the spell of his oratory and the hypnotic influence of his personality have been induced to hit the sawdust trail, may be surprised in that day to hear the Master say, "I never knew you." This young Evangelist, standing here in the open air and talking quietly to these country folk on the Galilæan hill, is as far removed from the modern evangelist who depends largely upon his slangy speech and his jazz-band and gymnastic accompaniments to attract attention and hold his crowd as one can well imagine. The one may well say to the other, "I never knew you."

Balaam prophesied. Judas cast out devils. Neither of them reminded anyone of the spirit and the methods of Jesus. He was meek and lowly in spirit, unselfish, truthful, and loving; as they were not. It is possible to

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prophecy in the name of Jesus and to cast out devils and to do many wonderful works and yet to be building on the shifting sands of personal ambition and popular praise and worldly fancies. The superstructure may seem to be safe, but the foundations are insecure. Only the superstructure is seen by men. The foundations are hidden from sight.

Jesus has been saying all through this Sermon that it is the hidden motive which counts. It is the personal character which determines destiny. He had delineated that character in the beatitudes. He had suggested its influence in the quiet shining of the light and the secret working of the salt. The righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees was largely obedience to the outward and ceremonial requirements of the law. Jesus had shown his disciples that their obedience must be better than that of the scribes and Pharisees because it went back to the hidden motives and the secrets of the heart. He had illustrated that truth in five particulars of the law. He had exhorted them to secret almsgiving, prayer, and fasting in singleness of motive to serve and please God. He had declared that their hearts ought to be free from useless worry and their lives free from uncharitable judgment. They ought not to indulge in foolish

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propaganda or faithless prayer or unbrotherly conduct. They were to be perfect as the Father is perfect, to seek his kingdom and his righteousness first of all, and to do unto others as they would have others do unto them. They were to beware of wrong ways and false prophets and insecure foundations.

5. *The Two Foundations.* It was all a matter of character resulting in conduct worthy of his teaching and his example. He closes now by saying, "*Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it,*" 7. 24-27.

In the book of Proverbs we read, "As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation."²³ Ezekiel inveighed against the prophets of his day who spoke out of their own

²³ Prov. 10. 25.

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hearts and declared that they were speaking the word of the Lord, "One built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar: say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it. Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it? Therefore thus saith the Lord God; I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury to consume it. So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I am the Lord. Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar, and will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it; to wit, the prophets of Israel which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and who see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace, saith the Lord God."²⁴

²⁴ Ezek. 13. 10-16.

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There will be no peace for the world except in obedience to the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount. The false prophets who preached the doctrine of preparedness before the Great War and the doctrine of retaliation while we were in it and who promised us peace by its compulsion were daubing with untempered mortar, and the ruin and wreck of our civilization bears its awful and convincing witness to the fact that the foundations they laid could not stand the stress of such a hail and wind storm as that conflict let loose upon us. Shall we go back now to the teaching of Jesus, to the practice of the Golden Rule, to supreme loyalty to the Kingdom rather than to any blustering and belligerent state, to the pursuit of the perfection of the Father, a perfection of love?

Elisha, the son of Abujah, was one of the rabbis, and he said: "The man who studies much in the law and maintains good works, to whom is he like? He is like a man building a house with a stone foundation and with tiles on the roof; and when a flood arises, and breaks against the walls, that house cannot be moved from its place. But the man who lives an evil life, in spite of having deeply studied the law, to whom is he like? He is like a man building a house with tiles for a

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foundation and with heavy stones on the roof: and when a little rain comes, straightway that house falls in." It is a close parallel to the parable of Jesus. Both teachers may have gotten the form of their thought from the Old Testament or they may both have adopted current phraseology.

6. *Authority.* It is not the originality of this Sermon which seems to have impressed its hearers, so much as its authoritative tone. Jesus spoke as if his words were of greater value than those of the Old Testament. He put his "I say unto you" over against the clear statements of the ancient law. He talked as if he were a lawgiver himself. No wonder that they were amazed. "*And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes,*" 7. 28, 29.

Lecky has said, "Amid all the sins and failings, amid all the priestcraft and persecution and fanaticism that have defaced the church, it has preserved, in the character and example of its Founder, an enduring principle of regeneration."²⁵ The more fully the church has recognized his authority, the more successful it has been in winning and holding the

²⁵ Lecky, *History of European Morals*, vol. ii., p. 9.

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confidence of men. The further it has departed from the letter and the spirit of the teaching of its Master in this Sermon on the Mount, in militarism and intolerance and per-do it because of his immediate intuition of secution on its own account and violent resistance to evil, the greater has been its failure in the centuries of the past.

It surely is time that Christendom should realize that Jesus speaks with authority and is to be obeyed. The Master Teacher of all time was here. This wisdom was not the wisdom of the schools. It had not been learned at the feet of any rabbi. It was the truth of God.

It suits well with God's out-of-doors. The mountain and the sea, the serpents and the fish, the birds and the flowers, the stones and the trees were preaching too. The morning breeze and the spring perfumes are in it. The youth of the Son of man with his boundless optimism and enthusiasm for the good, the beautiful, and the true sound through it. It needs no dim religious light of storied cathedral windows to mediate its meaning. It can stand the scrutiny of the dawn and of the day.

No scribe could say such things and make them seem plausible and possible. Jesus can

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the Father's presence and power. What the Son says the Father will sanction in the experience of the individual and the history of the nation and the life of the world. Let us believe and prove it true.

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